

Calvinist Contact

A Reformed Weekly

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Soviet linguists convinced there was one original language

Marian Van Til

MOSCOW — Some linguists are now convinced that *all* human languages have “sprung from some common source,” as Sir William Jones, an 18th-century scholar and judge put it. Several major magazines, including *Atlantic Monthly* and *Macleans* have reported on this “mother tongue” theory in one way or another in the last few months.

When Sir William trekked to India to study Sanskrit (initially as a diversion), he noticed striking similarities between that ancient language and Greek and Latin. By comparing consonant and vowel changes and word endings in languages as diverse as Sanskrit, Gothic, Old Irish and Persian, linguists after Jones devised an “ancestral tongue” which they call Proto-Indo-European. They surmise that such a language was spoken roughly 6,000 years ago in southern Russia near what is now the Turkish-Iranian border.

Now a handful of linguists are causing a stir, reports Diane Brady in *Macleans* (May 20), by claiming that it may eventually be possible to “trace all the languages spoken by the world’s five billion people back to a single root — the mother tongue of all humanity.” It’s estimated there are about 6,000 different languages worldwide.

Soviet linguists are working out a vocabulary which they say people may have spoken about 14,000 years ago. Working independently in the 1960s, though both at the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Vladislav Illych-Svitych and Aaron Dolgopolsky constructed a language known as “Nostratic” (from the Latin *noster*, meaning “our”). They did this by comparing the sounds and meanings of basic words in both modern and ancient languages.

Other scholars, in turn, have used Nostratic to construct words of an even earlier parent language or “proto-language” which “could be just steps away from the primordial tongue,” and which they say may have been spoken 100,000 years ago in Africa and the Near East.

Developing a dictionary

While many linguists, particularly North Americans, are skeptical and say the attempts to find an early ancestral language or languages are probably based on faulty scholarship, a growing number of language experts say the search is valid.

That search got a major boost as long ago as 1963 when Illych-Svitych and Dolgopolsky, who were comparing the development of various ancient languages, discovered similarities in certain words — fire, water, terms for body parts — that are basic to virtually all languages.

When Illych-Svitych was killed in an auto accident and Dolgopolsky moved to the University of Haifa in Israel, other Soviet scholars continued their work, developing a Nostratic dictionary of some 700 terms.

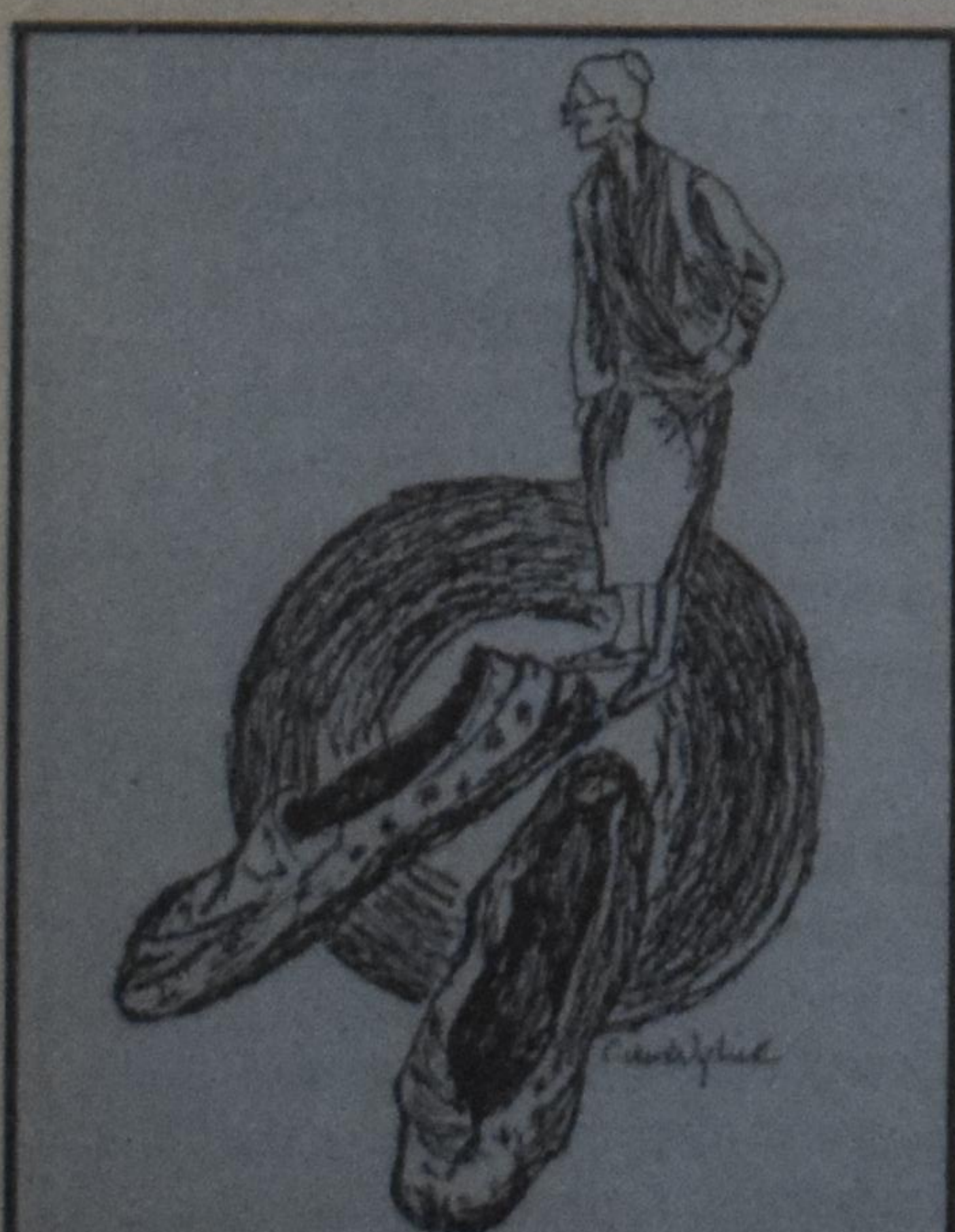
One of these scholars, Vyacheslav Ivanov, says that the next step in the search for a common ancestral language would be to translate the Nostratic dictionary into English. Ivanov is a professor of linguistics and Slavic languages at the Institute of Slavic and Balkan Studies in Moscow. *Macleans* reports that Ivanov is not impressed with the criticism of some North American linguists. “It’s shocking how few North American linguists know Russian,” he said while at the University of Toronto in April. “They can’t dispute what they have not read.”

(See also “Tower of Babel” on pg. 2)

Thinkbit:

Without any experience of God, experience of self is impossible.

Karl Rahner



In this issue:

The aged have much to offer the rest of us, and we must offer compassion and understanding to them. See stories and poems . . . pp. 8-9
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Relief supplies needed immediately to avoid mass starvation in Sudan

Alison de Groot

KHARTOUM, Sudan — More than seven million people are threatened by starvation and famine-related diseases in Sudan, according to the United Nations’ estimate. But this catastrophe is slipping by unnoticed by the world, unlike the Ethiopian famine which killed one million people in 1984-85 when a massive relief effort was initiated.

In western Sudan alone, one of the hardest hit regions, relief workers expect two million people to die this year, according to David Melvill, a consultant to the Canadian Council for International Co-operation.

Western diplomats in Sudan’s capital, Khartoum, say it’s already too late to save the lives of at least 300,000 people, despite constant warnings from relief workers since last August. An estimated 250,000 people were killed by famine in 1988 alone.

At least 1.5 million refugees have crowded into squalid camps around Khartoum where sewage runs in the streets and there isn’t enough clean water, according to a United Nations statement.

As many as 500,000 more Sudanese refugees have crossed into Ethiopia where another brutal civil war and drought have caused devastating famine.

Another 2,000 refugees have moved to Wicdengyang Camp beside the murky Sobat River that runs through eastern Sudan, its banks crawling with deadly puff adder snakes.

Sudan’s people need about 1.3 million metric tons of food to avoid mass starvation, but the world has come up with less than half that so far.

Government starving its own people

World agencies and governments are waiting for Sudan’s government to declare a food emergency, but the country’s military rulers refuse to admit there’s anything wrong, says Melville.

In 1990, despite warnings from relief officials, Sudan’s surplus food stocks were inexplicably exported, depleting Sudan’s food reserves.

That same year Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir grounded all relief flights after the first satellite photos predicting the drought leading to the food shortages Sudan is now facing.

However, drought isn’t the only problem. An intense civil war is raging between the Muslim Arabs in the North, currently in power with a military government, and the black Africans in the south who are Christians or animists.

The semblance of peace in Sudan a few years ago was credited mostly to the Christian churches in the south which adopted a position of tolerance towards the Muslim north; however that peace was shattered when newly empowered



Photo: C.C. Files

Famine-stricken Sudanese running out of time.

Bashir’s more militant government tried to impose Muslim law on the entire country, says World Vision’s Philip Maher.

Farming has all but ceased under continuous and intense bombing raids.

While civil war makes delivering relief difficult, restrictions placed on relief workers by the Sudanese government make it impossible.

“The first step in organizing an international relief effort is for the head of government of the afflicted country to ask for help,” writes Tony Hall, who is chairperson of the House Select Committee on Hunger for the U.S. Government. However, Bashir has so far refused to admit there’s a problem.

Despite the enormous task facing them, Christian agencies are making efforts to bring relief to Sudan.

World Vision, an international Christian humanitarian relief and development agency, has been working in Sudan since 1983, flying and trucking in food from neighbouring Kenya.

Horrific images

Maher, World Vision Canada’s information officer, says it’s easier for World Vision to work around the government in Sudan than for groups

See SUDAN—pg. 2.

Tower of Babel not a factor, says Christian linguist

Marian Van Til

ANCASTER — Classical languages professor Al Wolters of Redeemer College finds the mother tongue theory of Russian linguists fascinating. But it's the creation of Adam and Eve, not the Tower of Babel story, which lets us conclude there was one original language, he feels. Wolters says that because he believes the Tower of Babel event recorded in Genesis 11 has long been misinterpreted.

There already were diverse languages when the Tower of Babel event occurred, Wolters

concludes. When Genesis 10, the chapter *before* the Tower of Babel story speaks of Noah's descendants, it already categorizes them by their clans, nations and *languages*.

"The Hebrew word for 'language' in that chapter can be literally translated 'tongue' — that is, a language like French, Dutch, English, or as in the expression 'mother tongue,'" Wolters explains. "But the Hebrew word for 'language' used in the Tower of Babel story is a different word, one which means speech or communica-

tion. God confusing their 'language' meant a breakdown of communication, not the diversification of language," Wolters says. The people couldn't understand each other in the sense of not "hearing" what others were saying.

The tower event recorded in Genesis "was undoubtedly referring to Babylon," says Wolters. "Genesis was written

after the fall of Babylon and [the story is] an account of the rise and demise of the old Babylonian empire. Cuneiform sources tell us that there was a tower in Babylon which was used as a temple and whose top would reach heaven."

Wolters is always interested in possible connections between scientific developments like the "mother tongue" theory and the

biblical record. "You have to believe what the Bible says," he asserts, "but you can't use the biblical record to 'prove' things scientifically. I'm in complete sympathy with these Soviet linguists," he says, "but my saying that is more because I believe the Bible than that I think it can be scientifically established that there was once only one language."

Sudan needs supplies

...continued from page 1.

like the United Nations which, because of political associations, must work through governments.

"Humanitarian agencies including World Vision tried to persuade the outside world a famine was taking shape in Ethiopia in December 1983," says John Schenk, a Canadian World Vision relief worker based in Africa.

"No one believed it until 10 months later when a British television team emerged with the horrific images that are now legend. The evidence indicates that in another year or maybe two Sudan will yield the same images," adds Schenk.

Schenk says that kind of evidence, harrowing images of starving bodies, will prompt the West to send the much-needed food; however, "it will come too late for the starving."

Politics and infrastructure are the major barriers to delivering food aid to the area, according to Madeline

Wierenga of the Canadian office of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC).

The CRWRC is currently planning its first attempt to bring food into southern Sudan, a thousand metric tons of maize, millet and other grain products, though Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the Sudanese Council of Churches in July or August, according to Wierenga.

Wierenga says the CRWRC is targeting the Upper Nile region of Sudan where 220,000 people have come from camps in the north in search of food.

Need Christians' help

If this \$750,000 effort is effective, the CRWRC may plan another shipment of 2,000 metric tons for later summer, says Wierenga.

Maher, of World Vision, says right now Canadian Christians need to help. "First and foremost, Christians need to pray for peace," says Maher. "We can't do any long term development unless people can at least stay in their homes."

And second is money. With only 600,000 tons of the 1.3 million tons needed to avoid a catastrophe this year, Maher says relief agencies need money to buy food supplies.

"I believe people will give as long as it's not futile," says Maher in response to questions about donor burn-out, given all the pleas for disaster relief Canadians have faced in the past year.

"We have been able to do something there. We need peace, but there is hope for Sudan."

With files from the Toronto Star and the Christian Science Monitor.



Family Business



Jake Kuiken

'Mission statements or a credo?'

Some years ago I chaired a committee whose task was to conduct an organizational review of a human services organization. With the help of an organizational development psychologist, the process included preparing a new "mission statement." It was expected that the statement would capture the *raison d'être* of the organization and, once and for all, clarify its true purpose.

Well into the process there was a heated and somewhat confrontational argument between the director of the organization and the psychologist about the nature of organizations. I recall vividly my surprise at hearing a thoroughly secular psychologist forcefully declaring, "Damn it, at the bottom there's a *credo*!"

'The things we believe'

Somewhat astounded to hear these words, I asked him to explain what he meant. His response was roughly as follows: "It's the things *we believe* about ourselves and our purpose (read: 'mission') that are ultimately the most important things in defining an organization." What he was getting at is that organizations exist in a context of relationships, have a reason for their existence, value the things they do and declare themselves to stand for something.

More accustomed to thinking of a credo in an ecclesiastical context, my first thoughts were that the remark was a bit of an overstatement. However, in subsequent work with many other organizations its significance has been confirmed repeatedly. Particularly when boredom has overtaken commitment, when the purpose has been unclear, when conflict has reached intolerable levels, or when there's been a series of fractious events, differing credos have invariably been at the centre.

An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* just over two years ago tried to capture a similar thought, albeit in a slightly different way. After summarizing some of the major management fads of the last 20 years, including management by objectives (MBO), the managerial grid, management by objectives and results (MBOR), McGregor's X-Y theory, and the currently in-vogue, strategic planning, the reviewer concluded that they could be summarized as follows: "Know the business you're in and care about the people that work with you!"

Perhaps Thomas Watson Jr., a past chairperson of IBM, said it best: *This then is my*

thesis: I firmly believe that any organization, in order to survive and achieve success, must have a sound set of beliefs on which it premises all its policies and actions.

Next, I believe that the most important single factor in corporate success is faithful adherence to those beliefs.

People value making a contribution

A more recent example that points in the same direction is an extract from the 1990 annual report of Canada's Auditor General. Kenneth Dye, entitled, "Values, Service and Performance." After examining why some branches of the federal civil services excelled in their work, he concluded there were three aspirations at all levels and locations, namely: *People value making a contribution; they want to make a difference, have an influence, and master some task or activity. People value being recognized and rewarded for their contribution; they look for respect and appreciation. People value belonging to a group, especially if they consider that group to be successful.*

Mission statements are essential; they help support a direction and focus energy. But the really important stuff is usually contained in the credo of the organization. It's seldom stated and most often only articulated and understood by those who serve through leadership. Perhaps most frequently the evidence of its existence is found in the way organizations actually go about doing their business.

Acting with integrity

Whether it's human services organizations, trade unions, a small business enterprise, international conglomerate, churches or schools, all have and live out of a credo, the "I believe..." statements. Typically it places the organization in a context of relationships.

In every circumstance it's the credo which defines and directs the mission. Successful mission statements are therefore only possible once the "I believe..." has been clearly articulated and understood. Ambiguity begins to dissipate, energy is restored and conflict begins to diminish once the "credo" gets implemented with integrity!

Jake Kuiken is a registered social worker who lives and works in Calgary.



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With files from the Toronto Star and the Christian Science Monitor.

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You did, I did not, you did so, I didn't. Such was the transcontinental verbal fracas between Monsieur and Ontario's premier Rae. Rae accused Mulroney of badmouthing his province, and Monsieur denied it with the fervency of a novice pledging a life of chastity. After reading the verbatim report of Monsieur's remark to journalists about Ontario's "quite astonishing deficit rise" the whole thing appears to be a small storm in a miniature teapot. Splitting hairs on a bald head, that's what it was. On top of that it was a typical case of the pot calling the kettle black. Monsieur's federal deficit is not something to be sneezed at, either; it also has reached quite astonishing dimensions. A dollar used to be a piece of nice green paper that you folded into your wallet, now it rattles among the pennies in your pocket.

We are happy to award the annual highest merit prize to the 18 members of an Ottawa task force which recommended that the capital should be declared a "plain-language zone to stop the spread of government baffle and jargon-filled forms." The task force suggests that an "Office For Plain Language" be set up at city hall to wipe out Ottawa's third official language — bureaucratese. Hoorah! Bring on the kudos! If the Gulf general can be knighted these people deserve a duchy. At least.

Perhaps something could also be done about literacy in Ottawa, and I don't mean the Parliament Hill gang, although I have my doubts about some of the benchwarmers. I'm referring to a report from Statistics Canada which points out that 80,000 people in the Ottawa-Carlton region cannot read or write well enough to fill out a job application. A further 175,000 adults tend to avoid situations which require reading and writing.

Justice Minister Kim Campbell has introduced a revised gun-control bill which she hopes will become law. None too soon, either! Violent crimes in our country have increased 50 per cent in the past 10 years. That minister is going places, mark my words. One who didn't go any place at all is that beloved Don Blenkarn who, as head of the House of Commons Finance Committee, managed to spread embarrassment on the government like a farmer spreading manure. He did not get promoted to the federal cabinet and now Edmonton MP Murray Dorin is his successor.

This week's important question: Name the American auto-manufacturer with the greatest amount of

American-made content. The correct answer is Honda. Gotcha there, didn't I?

The Great Debate of the week was about the recovery of our economy. Statistics Canada says that the worst of the recession is over but the Toronto Dominion Bank was a bit less upbeat. Inflation seems to be holding steady, interest rates are down, construction starts are up, car sales up. I'll believe that the recession is over when the church's budgets begin to balance; and I have not seen that happen yet.

The tone of the constitutional debate has markedly improved since Mr. Joe Clark was installed at the Constitutional Affairs Ministry. There is a definite non-partisan sound to the debate in which the noises coming from the likes of Lucien Bouchard and Frere Jacques Parizeau are painful and disturbing dissonants.

Overheard in a conversation between two parties at opposite ends of the generation gap: "You people made a mess of this world"; upon which the older generation replied, "What are you complaining about, we gave you electric toothbrushes, didn't we?"

And how's this for a short honeymoon? Stephen Beck with was married only six hours to Letitia MacKenzie when he beat her so that the bride wound up in the hospital with a broken jaw, broken nose, fractured skull, broken ribs and two lung punctures. I hope they put Stephen away for a long while. There is, however, a lot of abuse of women left in this world. U.S. bishops wrote a pastoral letter which calls for greater participation of women in the church. The letter condemns sexism but it supports the church's ban on female priests. That's an oxymoron, Reverend Fathers! The Pope, by the way, named 22 new cardinals. Good business for the Vatican haberdashers. A lot of red hats on order.

The legacy of the Gulf War is still very much visible. Kurd refugees are still under guard. The sky in Kuwait is darkened with the smoke of hundreds of burning oil wells and the country's justice system is of the kind that says, "let's give 'em a fair trial and then hang 'em." The military in Germany is itching to get the constitution

changed to allow them to take parts in wars on non-German soil. Weapons manufacturers have gone into high production gear, and Mr. Bush's new world order looks very much like the one we have had for the last 2,000 years: wars and rumours of wars.

At least one war ended when Ethiopian anti-government troops occupied the country's capital. Another communist regime that bit the dust. The Israeli's had bribed the by-now toppled government with about \$35 million in order to repatriate Ethiopian Jews. Those who had converted to Christianity were left behind, though.

At the occasion of Monsieur's visit to Japan, Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu apologized for "unbearable sufferings and pains" inflicted on Canadian soldiers by the Japanese in W.W. II. A little green stuff, let's say \$20,000 for every survivor or his widow would have made the apology a whole lot more acceptable.

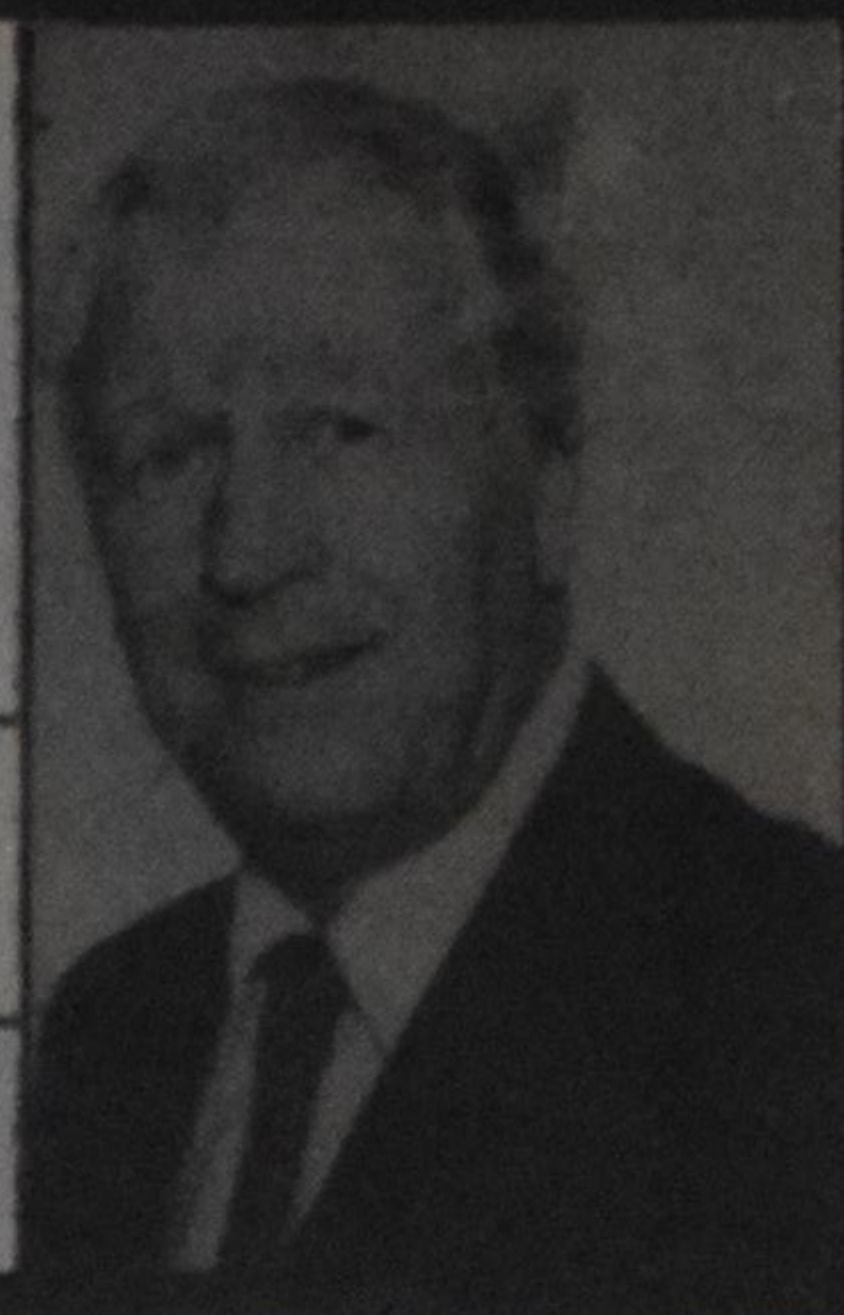
Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers has a good chance of becoming the new president of the 12-nation European Economic Commission — something that Mikhail Gorbachev won't like, for Lubbers advises against lending money to the bankrupt Russian economy. "Money in Eastern Europe is down the drain unless it's direct investment," said Lubbers. What he meant to say was that lending to the Russian *apparatchiks* was like putting the fox in charge of the chicken coop.

Foreign business ownership in the Soviet Union will soon be possible, for the Soviet parliament approved a law which makes it possible for foreigners to own companies in the U.S.S.R. Gorbachev's request for money has not been getting a lot of friendly support in the West. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl did not favour filling Gorbachev's empty bank account and President Bush said he wasn't ready to commit the United States to an aid package for the Soviet Union. Looks like Household Finance might want to open a branch in Moscow. If Gorbachev were trying to buy a used Edsel he would not be able to get credit from a loanshark.

There is one thing we ought not to forget about the Soviet Union. At Easter this year

Pressreview

Carl D. Tuyl



churches and cathedrals were packed as people celebrated the resurrection of our Lord, despite a 70-year effort by the Communist Party to make every Russian an atheist.

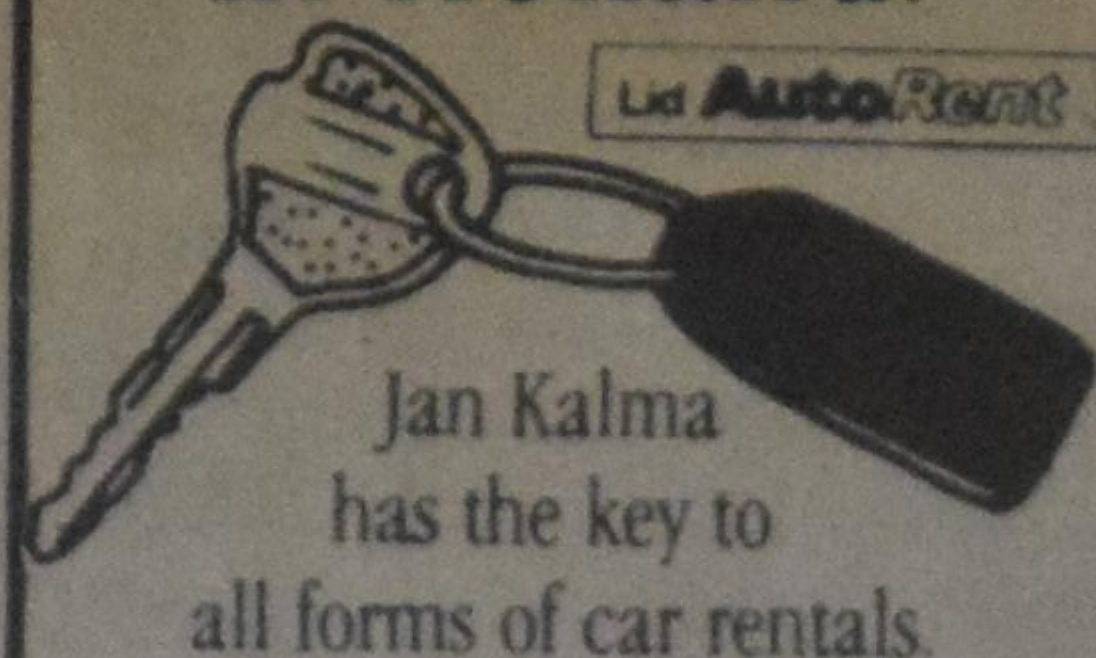
India is a country in turmoil. It is divided by caste, religion, race and geography. Religious conflicts often degenerate into violence. This never ceases to amaze me. Most religions maintain that there is one way to God and then devise hundreds of different ways to worship that God — and you better agree or we'll shoot, hang, burn or decapitate you. I settled a religious dispute the other day with an Anglican priest. I told him that we presbyterians had a much better grip on theology than Anglicans. When he asked me to substantiate that claim I told

him: you are only miserable sinners; we are totally depraved.

We will probably maintain our differences. Little Johnnie, who was Protestant, once went to swim at the beach. He had forgotten to take his swim suit along and, innocent as he was, he went skinny dipping. Little Mary, a Roman Catholic girl, ran to her mother and said: "Mommy, I tell you, those Protestants are different!"

Carl Tuyl is a member of the Ontario Provincial Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy and a chaplaincy co-ordinator in Canada for the Christian Reformed Church.

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The joy of personal discovery — ol' Apostle John would approve

In the morning service, as nine young adults stood in front of the congregation to profess their faith in God, they and the congregation recited a creed. Part of it read:

Jesus Christ is our best friend, our refuge and strength who will never forsake us. Through him we can do anything, even though we are sinners. We will do everything we can to please him and return his love, proclaiming his name to the world. We will pray to him in our times of need, knowing that he will listen to us when we need to talk. We are forever friends.

It was not one of the classic creeds formulated hundreds of years ago that sounded through the worship hall. It was a creed the group had made up together for the occasion of the profession of their faith. Their creed was doctrinally not as "complete" as the Nicene or Athanasian creeds are. There was no reference to the virgin birth and Pontius Pilate, nor to the holy catholic church and the resurrection of the body. But there was much more on what Jesus means to believers and on how the Holy Spirit works in them than can be found in any of the official church creeds.

What the confessing young adults did was unique and it showed that they wanted to assume responsibility for what they confessed. It's not that they don't believe in the doctrines they omitted; these just didn't come up in their minds. Young people are not terribly preoccupied with a virgin birth, a catholic church and the resurrection of their young bodies.

The aim is ownership

In the evening service, just before the sermon, the congregation watched a video on the "Coffee Break" program of the Christian Reformed Church. They saw groups of women studying the Bible together. The method used by "Coffee Break," they were told, is the inductive method. The inductive method implies that the group combs through a Scripture passage and pieces together all the bits of information they find to draw their own conclusions about what God is saying. Bible studies of the past were much more guided and consisted mainly of trying to prove what a booklet or a study leader had already concluded was the real point of the passage. That's the

deductive method of studying the Bible.

The aim of inductive Bible study is ownership. The aim of deductive Bible study is correctness. That's a cartoonlike way of putting it, but it makes a point. The group of confessing members may not have covered all the angles of doctrine in their creed, but they did show ownership of what they believe. Inductive Bible study and spontaneous creed making provide the joy of personal discovery and encourage personal faith growth.

We should welcome these new approaches to nourishing the faith of believers. They are in line with what the Scripture teaches about the knowledge of believers. Using Moses as a mouthpiece, the Lord told his people that "the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it" (Deut. 30:14). Believers are word carriers. And the aging Apostle John writes in his first epistle to fellow Christians that they have been anointed with the Spirit of truth and they don't need anyone to teach them (1 John 2:27). (I wonder how many pastors dare to tell their congregations that they don't need a preacher to teach them because they already know the truth.)

Looking at trees

That's not to say that there is no place for formal creeds, tested by time to be concise and full expressions of the faith of the church of all times. Nor does it follow that someone like a pastor who has spent much time studying the Scriptures should not remind the congregation of what they already know or lead a Bible study, using even the deductive method. I believe there should be a healthy balance between the spontaneous and well-thought-through, between the personal and the universal, the subjective and the objective, between the informal and the formal.

But for the time being, I thoroughly enjoy the swing towards the personal and spontaneous in our midst because I know that the Spirit is just waiting to reveal itself in the hearts of all believers. I am glad that people are carefully looking at the trees. There will come a time again that they will want to know more about the forest.

BW

Are you having fun while the culture shifts?

At a recent University of Calgary conference on charismatic movements, one of the organizers, a professor of anthropology, was quoted as saying that the emphasis by mainline churches on abstract doctrines "does not fully engage the body and mind and 'is no longer adequate for people who want to be spiritually fulfilled.' They want an open, imaginative and experiential faith. This marks a cultural reorientation which fits a world where traditions are essentially battered and people need to experience their faith firsthand." (Alberta Report, May 20, 1991).

What the professor was saying about charismatic movements can be said about a lot of changes experienced in churches. The old staid ways of being church don't seem to work anymore. He's right about connecting that with the fact that the culture is moving on us.

The shifting culture goes a long way toward ex-

plaining why a lot of churches are experiencing the strains and stresses of reorientation. In the case of the Christian Reformed Church this reorientation shows itself in a growing diversity of worship styles and a change in the role of women. Committees and delegates to assemblies are poring over Bible passages to find out what the Scriptures are saying about these changes. Their focus is on doctrine.

But without changing their attitude to Scripture people find that they come up with conclusions that differ from those they used to know. That's because the societal ground underneath them is shifting and with it comes changes of points of view. Points of view always depend on where people are standing when they take a picture or make an observation. It's impossible to convince a person of your point of view if he or she is standing somewhere else. The "conservatives"

Insight on hominids affected by Christian faith, says anthropologist

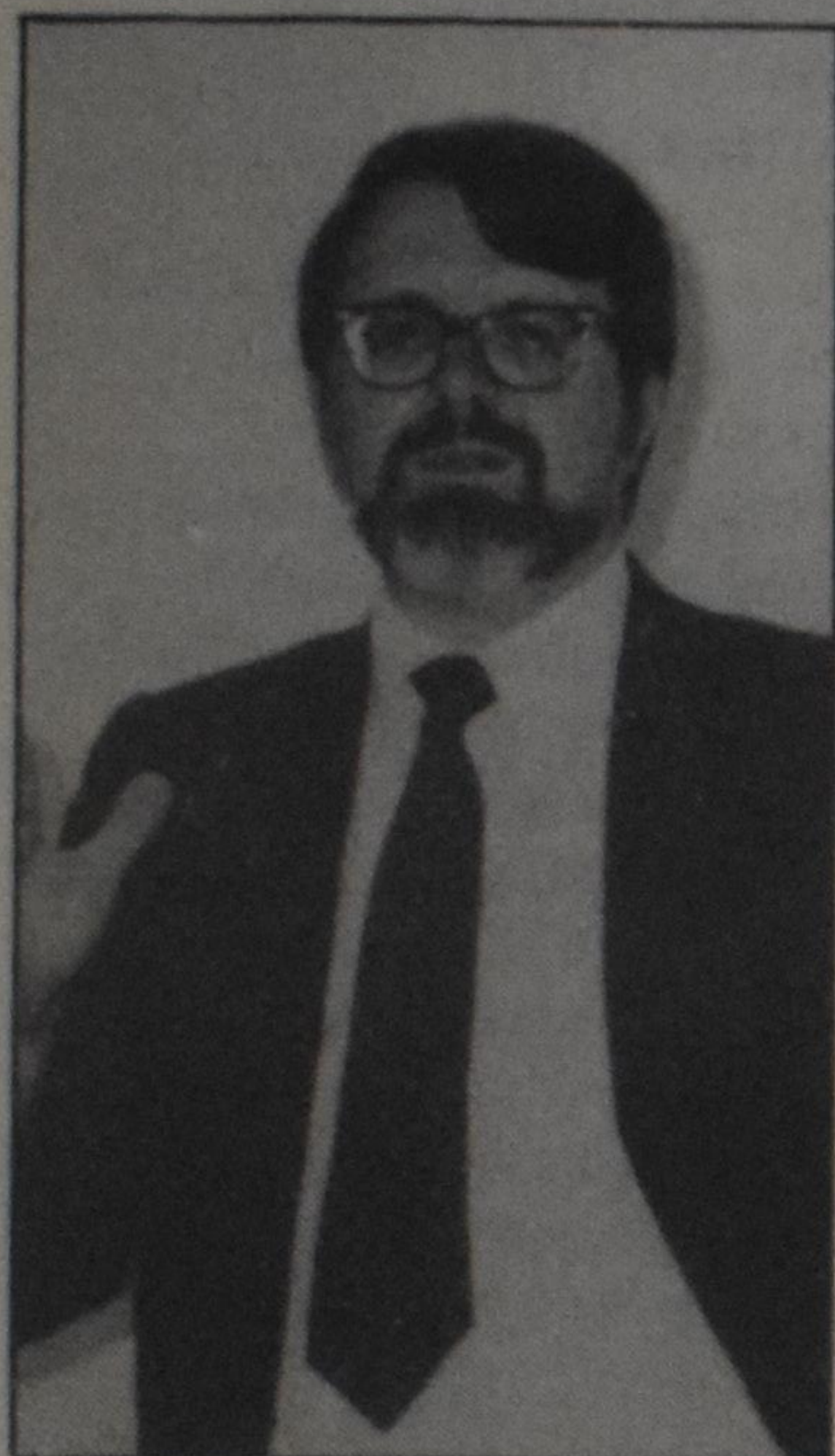


Photo: Robert VanderVennen
Dean E. Arnold says that homonids and the creation of Adam need to be understood together.

Robert VanderVennen
HAMILTON, Ont. : Hominid creatures seemed to have been placed by God on earth as long as two or three million years ago, said Dr. Dean E. Arnold during a recent visit to Ontario. Arnold is professor of anthropology at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, one of the foremost evangelical Christian colleges in the U.S.

We know about the existence of hominids from many fossil remains ranging from Australopithecus and Homo erectus, down to Neanderthals and early modern humans, asserted Arnold. A homonid, a term of specific biological classification,

walks uprightly on two feet, has a large brain size compared to body size, and has small teeth which are clearly different from animal teeth.

Are hominids human then? Arnold needed to hedge on that question, saying that there is too much uncertainty for us to know at present. All humans are hominids biologically, but God may have created hominids before he created Adam and Eve, Arnold believes.

Early hominids used stone tools, hence the name "stone age." Arnold thinks that Adam and Eve may have been created during the late stone age, perhaps 9,000 to 10,000 years ago, when there came to be a great variety of cultural expression and when farming started.

Everyone needs to approach these kinds of questions with much humility, says Arnold. There is simply too much that is unknown at present about homonids, and the subject does not threaten our faith, our relation to God, he says.

The question of how sin affects anthropological study led to a discussion of how one might expect to see evidence of the effects of sin from archaeological artifacts. To that there were not clear answers.

Arnold says that a grave of a woman has been found dating from Neanderthal times. The woman's shoulder bones had been broken, but bone growth around the break showed she

lived for some years after that. Flowers were buried with her. Animals and pre-humans do not take care of one of their own who has been incapacitated and unable to help with the work.

Arnold insists that humans were created in the image of God and used language, as some of the early hominids seem not to have done. He affirmed that Adam and Eve were created out of the dust of the ground and were given dominion over the environment, as Genesis tells us.

Christians bring special insights into the understanding of hominids, Arnold believes. We also bring attitudes to Bible study which need investigation, he added, including our sense of time and of kinship, which are different from those of Bible times. We must be humble as we try to understand what God is telling us about early human history through the fossil record and through the Bible.

Church news

Christian Reformed Church

Address change

Rev. Neil de Koning, 2433 Hamilton Road, Bright's Grove, Ontario N0N 1C0; (519) 869-6885.

The conference held at — not sponsored by — Dordt College on April 15 and 16 of this year discussed *only* the decision of Synod 1990 regarding opening all ecclesiastical offices to female members of the Christian Reformed Church. The conference did *not* look at the report on the relation of the Bible to science which will come before the CRC's synod this year.

Compliments to the editor and staff of *Calvinist Contact* for your editorials, articles and reports, and especially for the sensitive and constructive tone in which they are written. Continue to be bold in a reformational and loving way.

John C. Vander Stelt
Dordt College
Sioux Center, Iowa

Letter

Corrects error, praises contents and tone of C.C.

Bert Witvoet's helpful editorial comments at the beginning of "The President of Synod 1990 Speaks Out: A

Special Insert for Members of the Christian Reformed Church" (C.C. May 24) contained an inadvertent error.

blame the "progressives" for changing their hermeneutics, but it's really the experiences of life in a changing society that are changing people's point of view from which they apply their hermeneutics.

Conservatives should realize that they have changed too. Everybody is on this river called change, and no one looks at anything in exactly the same way twice.

That produces a real dilemma. Are there no certainties, no abiding principles? Yes, there are. But these principles will never be applied the same way. Paul found it necessary to be a Roman to the Romans. That called for a lot of adjustment. We are called to be "of the nineties" to "people of the nineties." That also calls for a lot of adjustment. But seeing that the alternative is irrelevance, we may as well enjoy the challenge.

BW

Cinema summaries

Marian Van Til



Only the Lonely

Rated PG

Stars John Candy, Ally Sheedy, Maureen O'Hara, Anthony Quinn, Jim Belushi, Kevin Dunn

Written and directed by Chris Columbus

The promotional slogan for this film says, "He can't tie the knot before he unties the apron strings," and that pretty much sums up what this good-humoured story is about.

Canadian comedian/actor John Candy (in his first role as a romantic leading man) is Danny Muldoon, a 38-year-old Chicago cop who still lives with his widowed, Irish-immigrant mother, Rose (Maureen O'Hara). Rose Muldoon means well but is tactlessly blunt and domineering — and lonely, though she won't admit it until she's forced to take stock of her life.

Danny loves his mother dearly and is afraid to hurt her, so he's a virtual slave to her will. Though he resents that occasionally, he resigns himself to sublimating his own needs to hers, hardly aware of the extent to which she has an emotional hold on him. What he sees as respect for his mother becomes a paralyzing force in his life.

That becomes a major complication when he meets and soon falls in love with Theresa Luna, the very shy daughter of a local Italian-American undertaker. When their relationship somehow progresses to the point of marriage, Danny must finally decide: "Who is more important to me, Theresa or my mother?"

Fine performances

John Candy makes Danny Muldoon's spinelessness seem less annoying than it might have been by combining it with a gentle, unselfish nature which garners audience sympathy. Maureen O'Hara as Mrs. Muldoon is superb in her first screen appearance in nearly 20 years. Her character could have been thoroughly unlikable in the hands of a less skilled actor. But she invests Mrs. Muldoon with such ingenuousness that her overpowering and irritating personality doesn't make us hate her; and even her bigoted statements about Italians, Greeks and Jews (at which Danny is appalled — Theresa is the butt of various insensitive remarks) are humorous: we're the ones in on the joke; it's on her, but she doesn't know it.

Even Ally Sheedy, who in the past hasn't proven that she has great acting ability, rises to the occasion, though her character is still not as interesting as the others. Veteran actor Anthony Quinn, however, provides additional humour as Rose's next door neighbour who is hopelessly in love with her but is spurned because he's Greek.

Though the mother-son relationship seems to be centre-stage, *Only the Lonely* has another overall theme, perhaps in reaction to the self-absorbed, here today-gone tomorrow attitudes of the '80s: that a loving relationship and stable life with one person (yes, marriage) is a sure way to happiness and that one shouldn't allow anything to stand in the way of the chance to develop such a relationship.

Society/Church

Canada has a future, but politics won't save us: research foundation

Robert VanderVennen

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. — We are drifting into government control of all areas of life because people expect politics to provide security and find the answers to our problems.

This is the message that the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) and its Work Research Foundation have presented to The Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future (the Spicer Commission). The cogent 22-page submission offers a Christian view of society as the basis for renewal of Canada. It is "an argument against social engineering and the interventionist state," says Harry Antonides of the Work Research Foundation.

We have thought that freedom meant individualistic separation from group commitment, but the ironic result is that the government and its political apparatus have stepped forward to provide the welfare safety nets that individuals have lost by disconnecting themselves from families, churches and other voluntary networks.

We want a political solution for everything, says the CLAC brief. Boundary lines between the private and public sectors are disappearing. With increasing politicization of life we have increased political

strife and decreased freedom.

The brief advocates a united Canada and it finds Quebec's Allaire Report unacceptable. It points out that we have prosperity, freedom and opportunities for enrichment. Our land has great natural resources, immense space and exquisite natural splendour.

'Caring state' oppresses

The root of the current problem and direction of Canada lies in our turning away as a nation from a Christian view of who a person is and what it means to live together, says the WRF presentation. Humanist values are individualistic and relativistic, now

referred to as pluralism. The gospel of self-realization has led to the notion of the caring state, a doctrine promoted by all three current national political parties.

Multiculturalism should not try to transplant foreign cultures to Canada; that results in diversity that weakens Canadian nationhood, the brief maintains. The Common Law tradition which gives equality of *opportunity* has given way to the Charter of Rights, which has come to mean equality of *results*. The state has become the dispenser of rights rather than the protector of freedom.

The interventionist state is

one prone to mismanagement, says the brief. Our increasing strangulation by the national debt is an example. "As long as we look on politics as purely self-serving, then confrontation, distrust, conflict, and bureaucratic muddle will prevail," the brief concludes.

As an example of developing effective non-public intermediary structures, the brief encourages giving more responsibility to parents for the education of their children by providing them with tuition vouchers to be used in the schools of their choice. It deplores the bias toward child care in publicly-funded day care centres. It argues for the

rights of minority labour unions.

The CLAC says that as a labour union it works to promote justice and a spirit of co-operation rather than confrontation in the workplace. It has presented this brief in the hope that the principles it has found effective will also be valid in politics, Antonides says.

The brief ends with a summary of 17 key points which offer a Christian testimony for moving toward a united nation fashioned on a base rooted in Christian principles for the good of all.

B.C. church with 'large vision' celebrates decade of service

R. Jack De Vos

NANAIMO, B.C. — "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...." That verse probably wasn't foremost in the minds of the Indians who settled Vancouver Island long, long ago, but the section they named "Nanaimo," which means "gathering of the tribes," has become strangely prophetic.

In 1980, Rev. Al and Lynn Likkell left their work as home missionaries for Christian Reformed Home Missions in Islip, New York, and moved to Nanaimo to start a new church. Ten years later, the once-fledgling church has a brand new building, over 300 members, and a successful ministry that is truly gathering the lost from God's many tribes.

Christ Community Church

began as a Home Missions church. That means it was initiated by local people who recognized the need for an evangelical presence in their community. What began as a group of Christians studying the Bible has culminated in today's celebrations of a decade of ministry.

It was a busy decade. When the Likkells arrived in Nanaimo, the first thing Al did was get the "lay of the land." That meant interviewing not only the local people but governing officials "from the mayor on down." Likkell got their input on what made Nanaimo unique, what its primary needs were, and how a church could help. "These leaders all felt that already-existing churches were very 'in house.' Community leaders saw them as having no impact whatsoever on the local community; as not integrating themselves or their ministries in the community and its needs. Their primary recommendation was that we, as a church, be more open and accessible."

Likkell's second step was to visit all the churches in the community. "That wasn't too hard in the early '80s because Nanaimo was very under-churched." By attending churches Likkell was able to see what worked, what not to duplicate, and what was missing.

"Most of the services we attended were not at all celebrative. The joy was missing. And many lacked a strong educational program," he says. Those discoveries resulted in a worship service that emphasizes the joy of faith in Christ, and an educational program to meet the needs of all age groups.

Meeting real needs

The third step Likkell took was to check the national



Photo: courtesy Christian Reformed Home Missions
(l-r) George and Bertha Likkell (Al Likkell's parents), Al and Lynn Likkell, and Henry and Lena Giessen (Lynn's parents) receiving the special anniversary booklet. The parents of the Likkells have supported the Nanaimo ministry with prayer since it began 10 years ago.

statistics. "When we arrived here Nanaimo had some of the highest statistics in Canada for alcoholism, wife abuse, child abuse and so on." That finding has led to a full-time Christian counsellor on staff, a strong emphasis on recovery programs and other programs that meet very real needs.

But ask Likkell which of those has been the key to their growth and he'll say none of them. "Friendship evangelism makes a stronger impact than anything else we have. Reaching out with love is our greatest area of growth." By having "seeker sensitive" morning worship services, church members feel comfortable taking visitors along. Said Likkell, "It enables people to say, 'Come and see our church.'"

Recently graduated from Home Missions support, Christ Community Church is anticipating another 10 years of growth. With three staff, four volunteer directors, and several programs that minister to the community, Likkell said the growth potential is multiply-

ing. "We want to enlarge our vision as to the amount of lost sheep that we can bring in with God's help."

Already conducting two morning services and considering a third, Christ Community is also praying about the possibility of planting satellite churches in surrounding areas and of involving more members of the church in service-oriented ministries in Third World countries.

God's faithfulness and the diligence of church leaders like Al Likkell have certainly enabled Christ Community Christian Reformed Church to fulfil the Indian prophecy to "gather the tribes." In obedience to the Great Commission, however, church members hope the next decade will see many of the newly-gathered believers begin to disperse to other parts of the city and the world to gather those who are still lost.

R. Jack De Vos is director of development/communications for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

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Church

Marian Van Til, page editor



A Presbyterian Comments

Robert J. Bernhardt

Would you give stones for bread?

My preparation for a recent premarital seminar that I was to conduct reminded me once again of the importance of listening. Because those who offer counsel must be prepared to heed it themselves I was reflecting on the various implications of what I intended to be commending to others.

Human communication is a two-way process. Sometimes, though information is being effectively expressed, it has little practical effect because the intended recipient isn't listening at that moment. On the other hand, we may be so conscious of what we have to share with someone else that we don't actually pause to notice how they may be responding.

As I reflected on these potential pitfalls as they applied to my personal communication with my family and

those with whom I associate in a variety of roles, I also began to think about the implications for the sharing of the Gospel.

Get out the right message

Blessed with the Good News of Jesus Christ we within the church have a strong sense of our commission to go and tell. However, even when we do this in an appropriate spirit of humility (as one beggar telling another where to find food) there is an ever-present danger that we will not pause to notice how those with whom we hope to share this information are actually responding.

Could it be that our efforts to share the way of life in Christ are diminished in their effectiveness or are even confusing people because we are giving answers that don't match their

immediate questions? If non-English speaking visitors to our community ask us how to find the bus station and we direct them to a local church is it likely that they will come back to thank us for the precision and accuracy of our directions? Is it likely that they will stop to admire this church and what it represents? Though our misdirection was not a prank and may have resulted from a genuine misunderstanding, the accuracy and sincerity of our response is unlikely to assure us of appreciation.

From monologue to conversation

Perhaps we within the church need to punctuate our proclamation with periods of more attentive listening. Then perhaps our proclamation can be made in such a way that

those who hear it may appreciate what it has to do with them and their immediate circumstances. Increasingly I am impressed with the fact that the New Testament accounts of Gospel proclamation are so frequently cast in an almost conversational mode — carefully tailored to the immediate situation and circumstances of the audience. Proclamation, whether in word or action, that does not touch a responsive chord in the hearer is more monologue than conversation.

If I go to my doctor he assumes that I have come with some concern about my health. However, both he and I expect that he will give careful attention to the specific symptoms I am experiencing before he prescribes medication or treatment. Similarly, the spiritual

circumstances of different individuals suggest that there are a great variety of needs to be met on the route to life and peace with God in Jesus Christ. We need God's Spirit to give us sensitivity and wisdom so that we within the church may apply our proclamation to the immediate and most crucial maladies.

Although my thoughts have seemed to wander rather far astray from communication within marriage, if the church is the family of God, then perhaps the parallels ought not to be a surprise.

Robert Bernhardt is pastor of Chalmers Presbyterian Church, Hamilton, Ont.

Squabble in Habitat for Humanity may cost ministry Carter's support

ATLANTA, Ga. (EP) — An apparent feud between Habitat for Humanity founder Millard Fuller and the organization's board of directors may cost the ministry its most visible supporter — former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

Carter, who has volunteered as a carpenter and led fundraising efforts for the ministry,

said he may quit because of an announcement by Fuller that the board had pushed him to resign as president. The resignation would be a severe setback to the 15-year-old Christian organization that works to build affordable housing for working poor people worldwide.

"Recent decisions by the

board of directors of Habitat to force the resignation of Millard Fuller as president have been quite disturbing to us," said a statement distributed on behalf of Carter and his wife, Rosalynn. "There has been something of a power struggle in the international headquarters that has nothing to do with building homes for poor families around the world."

The statement continued, "Our prayers are that the board of directors will be able to resolve the arguments. Our own personal roles in the future will be more specifically defined by these decisions."

Habitat's board chairman,

Geoff Van Loucks, said the board was troubled by Fuller's frequent travels, which interfere with his duties involving the day-to-day leadership needs of the organization. Van Loucks said the board is trying

to find a leadership role for Fuller that would not include administrative responsibilities, but Fuller says he's not interested in being a "ceremonial president."

A new face to promote Ontario Christian Schools

C.C. staff

ANCASTER, Ont. : The board of directors of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) has appointed Ralph Luimes as public relations co-ordinator, beginning Sept. 1 this year. The appointment was approved by the alliance membership as part of the new public relations program proposed by the OACS.

In addition to taking over existing responsibilities, Luimes' is expected to focus on the mass media and provincial politicians. He is to develop and set up the necessary media contacts and organize major promotion campaigns as the alliance assumes a proactive strategy for proper recognition of Christian education in Ontario.

Luimes comes to the OACS

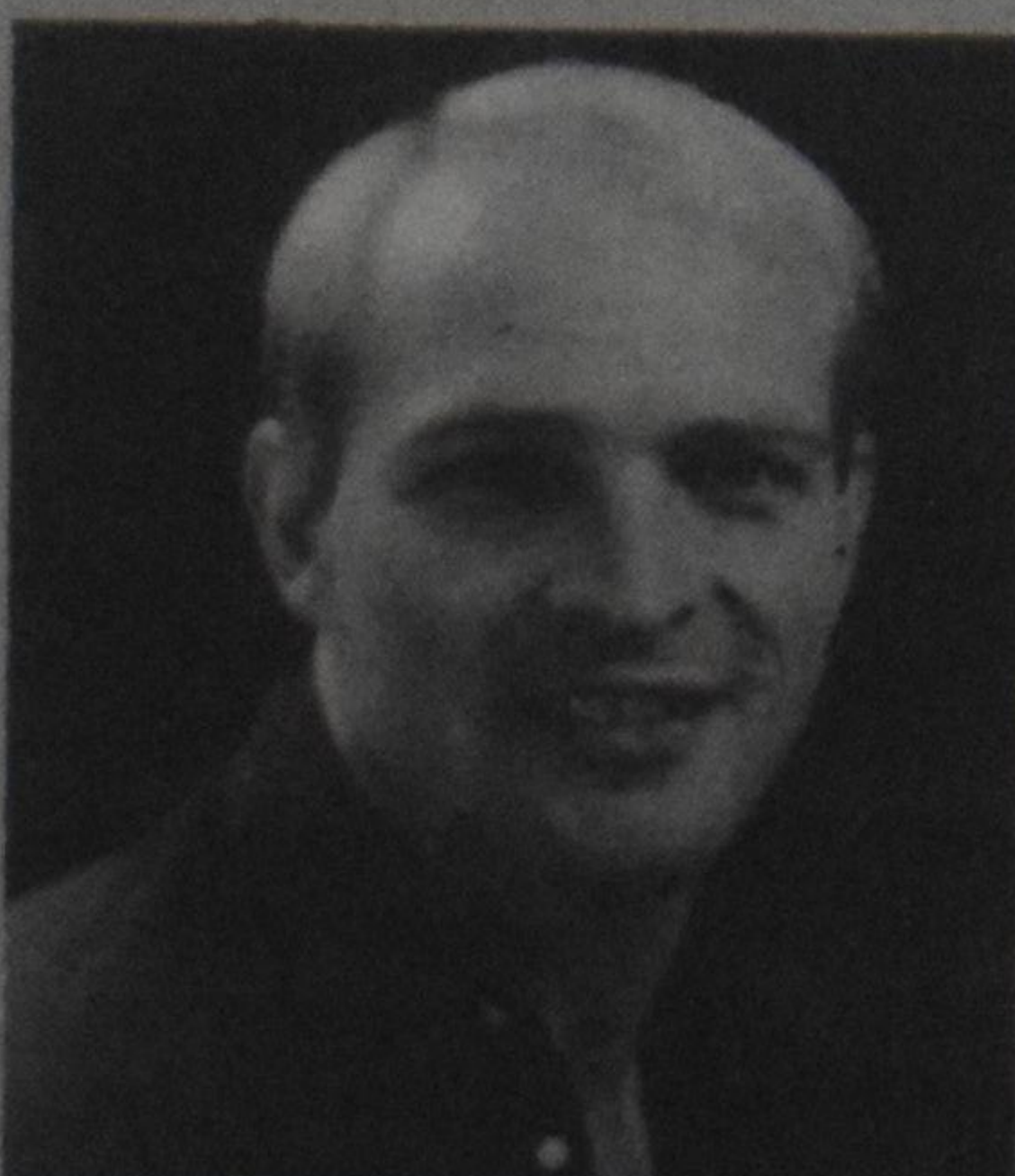


Photo: courtesy of OACS

Ralph Luimes

with undergraduate degrees in agriculture from the University of Guelph and physical education and science from Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Mich.), as well as a master's degree in sports administration from the University of Ottawa.

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Features

Where was God...?

Anne Hutten

But where was God *standing* when he made the world?" demands the high, thin voice. Bemused, I look down at the frail, bedridden form. This little sparrow of a woman wrestles with theological questions that aren't part of my busy schedule.

I wonder how her mind works as she lies there day after day, old used up body too weak for walking, but thoughts still churning, posing puzzlers that she had no time for during her active life. Is she coherent? I ask myself. Why is she in this nursing home? Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, or just a generalized aging process that has left only a wisp of her former self?

"How would *you* answer that question?" she persists. "Because if you were making something, would you be standing on it while you were making it? Tell me, where would you be standing?"

Intrigued, despite myself, I continue listening as she rambles on. It's her roommate, Grace, whom I'm visiting today; but on hearing that this tiny woman is writing a book I've wandered over to strike up a conversation. Her name is Ethel, and she's part of a black community just 10 miles north of our place. According to the nurse, she's 102 years old. Should she be capable of writing her memoirs, who knows what jewels of wisdom might emerge?

Images flash through my head: the television program, "Roots," broadcast years ago; rebellious men with proud faces and deeply scarred backs; exquisite young women, ravished by the evil white slave owner. Does this woman have an oral tradition of these things, passed on by only one or two generations before her? If so, should I offer to type the manuscript? Behind me, Grace moves restlessly. Like most of the old people I've adopted over the years, she wants my attention while I'm there. Visitors are a scarce commodity, and it's not fair if her roommate usurps their time. But I linger a few more moments, asking Ethel to repeat her last statement. Her eyes are on me, set in a shriveled wrinkled face but bright and inquisitive still.

"See, God has more than a hundred

names," she declares. "There's Lord and Messiah and Christ and Jehovah. And all of them have to do with the same question. I'm reading up on this, to see what other writers are saying about this."

Bony curled claws, fingernails brittle, hold a devotional booklet. I'm disappointed. She's not reading one of the old philosophers or theologians, but a generic dose of daily Good News. How would she receive additional wisdom from such a mundane source? But she's off and running with yet another thought.

"I read this carefully all the time," she proclaims, her voice like the pitch of a toy guitar. "See, I don't want to be what we used to call a copycat back when I was in school. But when I read what other people have to say on this, it gives me ideas. It makes me think my own thoughts. And I want to write that down, because really, how many people do you think still believe that?"

I want to say yes, I do understand. Our most brilliant insights are formed and shaped by other opinions and expressions, absorbed over a lifetime of conversation and books. But I can't make the connection between God creating the world and his many names, and I remain silent. My lack of response is unsatisfactory to her. I'm still formulating something polite when her voice is back, small but demanding.

"Do *you* believe that? Because it's important that everyone believe that about God. I keep reading because I want to write about it. Where *was* he standing when he made the world?"

Grace is fiddling with the top drawer of her dresser and I use that as an excuse to break away from the miniature theologian. Bright eyes behind distorting lenses follow me reproachfully as I help Grace retrieve a highly valued bottle of Minute Maid orange pop from the drawer. Relieved, as though dismissed by a stern teacher after some misdemeanor, I settle down once more to visit.

"I had an awful fight with the nurses," confides Grace. "I hauled off and hit one of them. Smacked her right in the face. I was so mad."

My attention is diverted. Grace hasn't been happy in this so-called "home," and is often at odds with the staff. But I can't encourage rebellion. She's a Parkinson's victim and needs heavy-duty care. Fighting with the nurses can only deteriorate the already strained relations she now experiences with nurses and aides alike.

"That's probably not a real good idea, is it," I say calmly. Then, evincing empathy in the best sociological tradition, "You must have been frustrated; were you?"

"Yes, I was!" she responds, angry again. "She wouldn't let me get out of bed. They're always telling me to stay in bed when I want to get up. She bent her head down and I hit her as hard as I could. I was so mad I threw my pan of water all over the floor. The other nurses couldn't hold me down either, I



was so mad. I hit them all when they come in here."

Oh. The first smidgin of doubt seeps into my brain. She's always been highly intelligent, independent, hot-tempered, impatient with the slower world around her. But this disease is finally wearing her down. Her body is losing the fight inch by inch, pain and disability seizing the legs, the eyes, the stomach. In more recent months I've noticed a mental decline as well. At first it was hallucinations brought on by surgery after a broken hip, but there seem to be moments now, two years later, when she again sees events that are not visible to anyone else.

"It's some cold out there." I change the conversation, falling easily into the local vernacular. "The roads are pretty bad, snow on top of freezing rain last night. Fastest I could do was about 20 miles per hour."

It works. Grace's mind is away from the fight with nurses and out on the highways. She responds, her normal intelligent manner restored.

"Last week was sure a lot nicer," she agrees. Then she continues. "It was so warm they let us all out. I walked all the way down to the duck pool with my walker. The ducks aren't out yet, though. There's still ice in the water."

"As happens so often during a visit here, I find the conversation somewhat disorienting. Is she confused again, or is it me who is confused?"

Oh, again. How do I sift it out? What is fact and what is illusion? She has not been walking outside, with or without a walker, for more than a year. At least, I don't think she has been. A feeling of

unreality sets in. As happens so often during a visit here, I find the conversation somewhat disorienting. Is she confused again, or is it me who is confused?

My mental gears are in overdrive. She's right about ice still being in the duck pond. Did she dream about getting outdoors once again? Is spring too long in the making? All around her, fellow residents are dying off during this bleakest of seasons. The days are already much longer, but the wind is chilly. To the body imprisoned by illness and isolation, cut off from human love and touch, winter becomes the final blow. The spirit gives up. The body slows down even more and stops breathing. In such an environment, is it any wonder that Grace's mind gets confused at times?

I say goodbye with extra warmth today, taking care to hug her shoulder, to kiss her cheek. To her roommate I offer a casual farewell also, but she's engrossed in her devotional book once more.

A wild gush of snow-laden wind strikes me as I walk out to the car. The physical shock of cold air rushing past is a relief after the fetid stench of old bodies and cramped, overheated rooms.

I flex my fingers thoughtfully, manipulating the car keys on their shiny ring before opening the door and taking off. I'm aware of a responsive body, spine curving easily into the driver's seat, feet contacting pedal without effort. It takes no concentration at all to turn the steering wheel, hit the brakes, activate the turn signal, touch the gas again. Health is mine.

But as I head down the highway, one random thought returns. Where *was* God standing when he made the world?

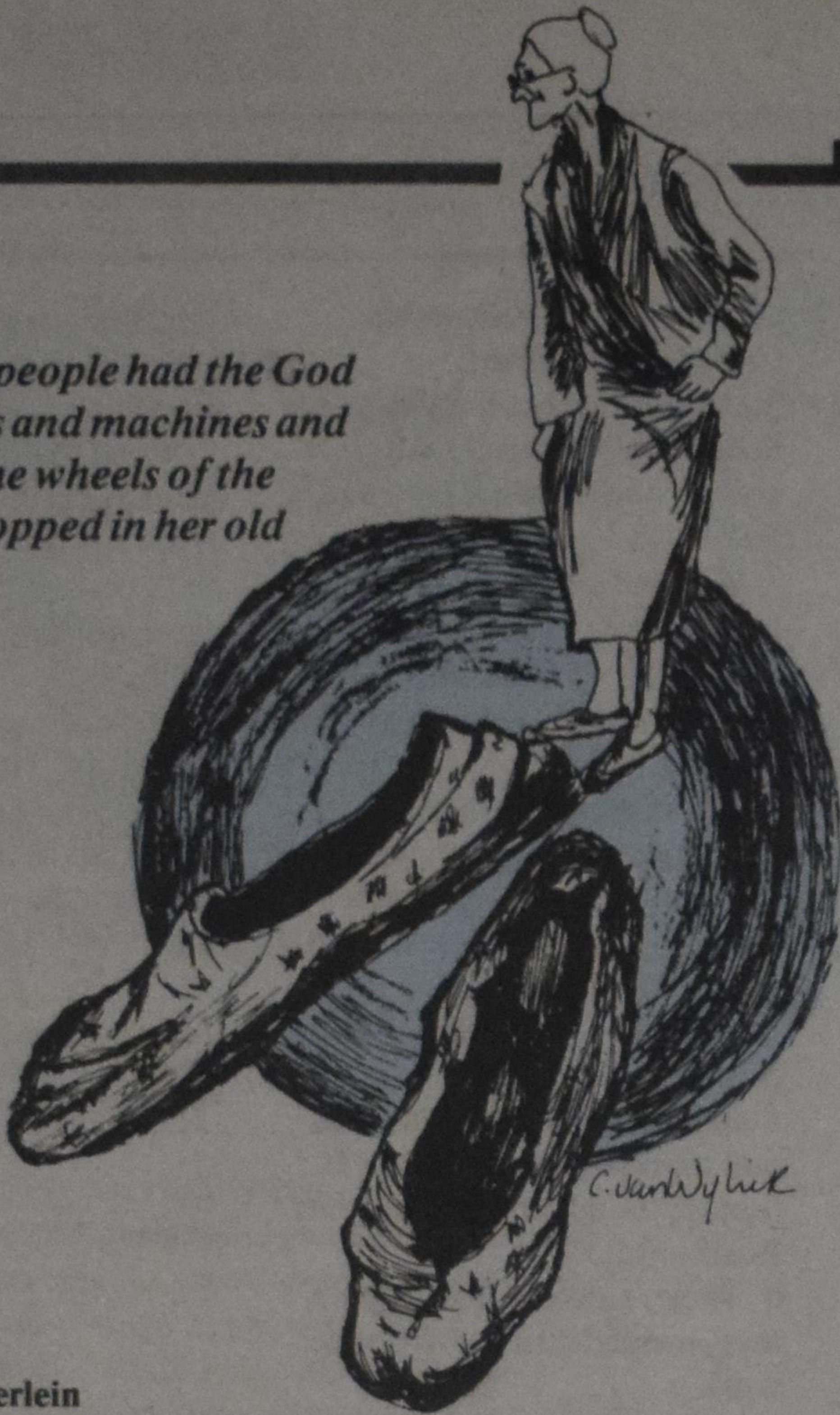
Anne Hutten is a farmer and journalist and editor of Nova Scotia Christmas Tree Journal. She lives in Lakeville, Nova Scotia.





Slippers

"The young people had the God of computers and machines and magic. But the wheels of the world had stopped in her old slippers."



Marion Schoeberlein

The night breaks in two. The old light leans away in darkness, the new night leans toward morning. That was the way the old lady thought every day when she got up and put her slippers on. They were hardly slippers now. She had bought them at Walgreens three years ago. Then they had been soft and comfortable, even pretty, but since then she had stretched them, punished them, crucified them. No matter how old they looked, though, or how battered and patched and worn they were, she could always talk to them, just like she talked to her plants.

"They are my green flesh growing. They probe at the sadness of my windowsill. They compete with paper flowers in my living room. I water them too much. I wonder what they think. Maybe they wonder what I think."

Well, people never care what women think, she mused. People didn't, but her cat did. Mitzi could always hear her coming, shuffling along in the old slippers. To Mitzi, the old lady was the most important person in the world. Not just because she fed her, either. Mitzi knew the old lady loved her, even though she grumbled and scolded and sometimes fed her only leftovers from the kitchen table when she was all out of cat food.

There wasn't a softer touch in the world than the old lady's hand. And it was so much fun to rub against her legs and sniff at her old slippers! Every day they had a different scent. Sometimes they smelled of old newspapers in the basement. Sometimes they smelled of dust after she'd been sweeping. Once in a while they had the faint aroma of a little salmon juice which she'd spilled on them when she opened a can for supper. After all, she wasn't very good on her feet anymore.

Sometimes the slippers smelled clean, after the daughter had washed them for her. The daughter came twice a week to look in on her mother and was always quick and bright and efficient, and she scolded the old lady for not wearing the new bedroom slippers she had bought her and the new housedress and robe.

Mitzi sided with the old lady. After all, what did the daughter know about being 89 years old and finding it hard to get dressed in the mornings and just wanting to feel comfortable in the old, worn-out things?

The old lady liked to sit on her porch, crocheting and reading the Bible. Her rocking chair went back and forth. She talked to God a lot while she crocheted and rocked. He was old, too, she thought, and he understood old ladies better than most folks.

It was interesting to watch the neighbourhood while she sat out on the porch — who had a new car, a new baby, a barbecue out in the yard. She wished some of the neighbours would visit her but they never did. In the old days it had been different.

Her own mother had had all kinds of visitors. Grandmothers in those days, even if they were old-fashioned, were wanted and needed. People painted their portraits, people like Whistler, wearing the mantle of centuries. That was how important they were.

Everything was different today. Sometimes better, sometimes worse. But even if she was alone there were so many beautiful things to listen to... sounds like coffee bubbling, birds singing, angels in the trees when they got green again.

It was easy for the old lady to be thankful. She was very close to God.

Her old slippers padded around the house and *he* heard them.

She was humble and poor and she didn't worry anymore because she knew life would soon be over for her. The young people had the God of computers and machines and magic. But the wheels of the world had stopped in her old slippers.

She was a frameless picture. A searchlight into heaven.

When she was gone, the harps of a thousand other old ladies would sing in sadness, remembering, but her *slippers*, her old *slippers* would be left behind, a constant reminder of how dear she had been, how close to God in her shuffling psalm of a walk.

Marion Schoeberlein is a free-lance writer who lives in Elmhurst, Illinois.



Poems

The Stroke

Yesterday you hung your cane
beside the door
heralding your arrival.
Your licence to drive
renewed, you told with pleasure,
eyes shining with another
year of independence.

Today you lie stiffly
on a high, narrow bed
eyes alert
words choking in your brain.

Trying to push coherent
patterns from your mouth,
the letters coming in bunches,
bundles of consonants sounding
unfamiliar to your ears.

Left-sided impairment.
Wounded with words.
What prison you inherit
on this side of heaven
where once you felt
God's image in your words,
defined existence by them.

Now bound perhaps for days
or til your tongue is loosed
around his throne to sing
in many languages
praise to your deliverer.

Waiting

Our mouths prayed
for his restoration
that he'd be brought back
to what he was —
sound
at eighty-five years —
his birthday
tomorrow.

Underneath God heard
our silent sighs
trusting his overall wisdom
to know the paths of our lives.

We waited
watching
because we could not always see
what He could see.

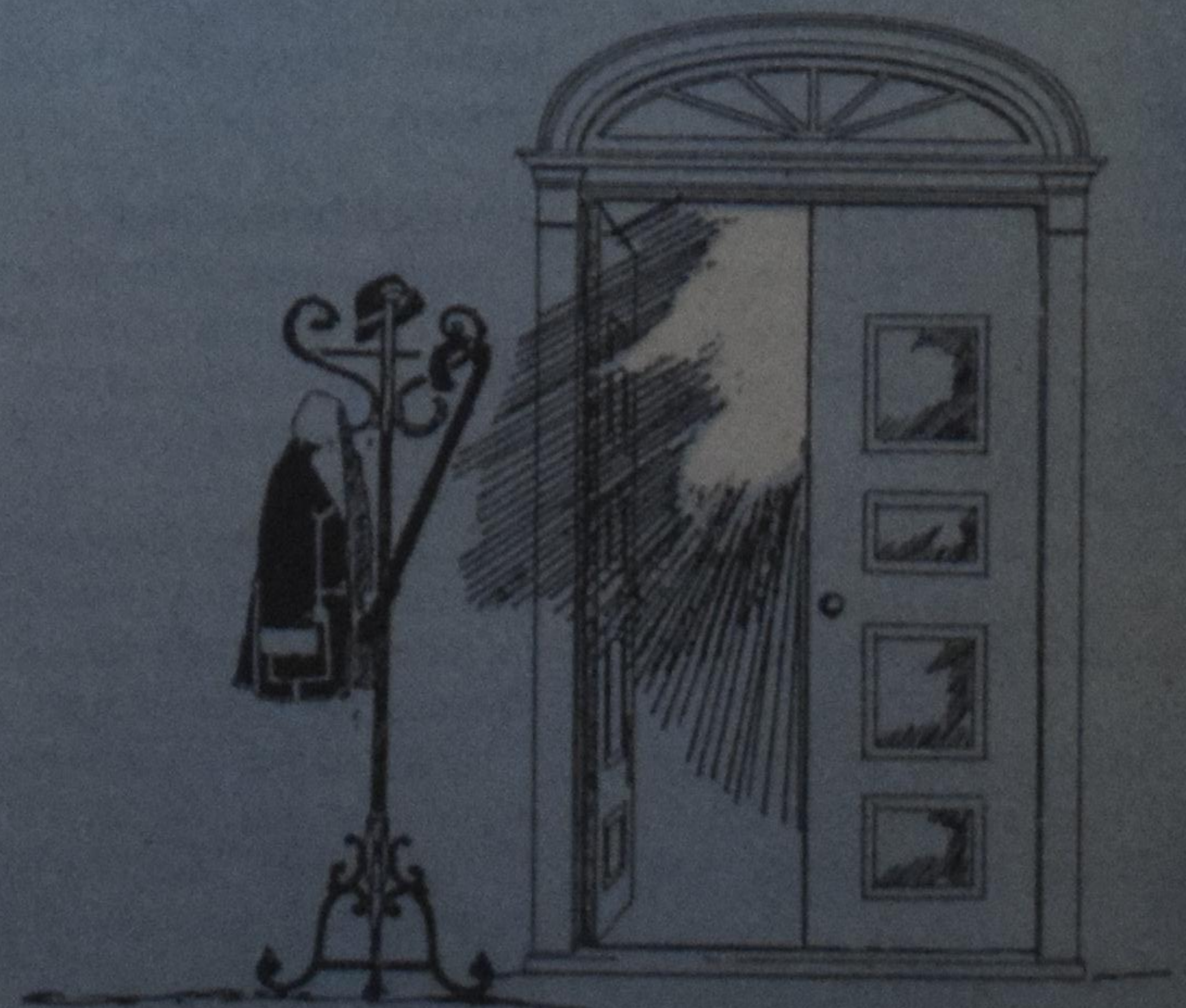
Released

We still see through
a glass darkly
but he sees face to face.

Transported beyond
the onslaughts of pain
and physical breakdown

he comes before the throne
tongue loosed
to sing new versions
of Amazing Grace.

**All poems by:
Linda Siebenga
Blackfalds, Alta.**



The long and short of modelling

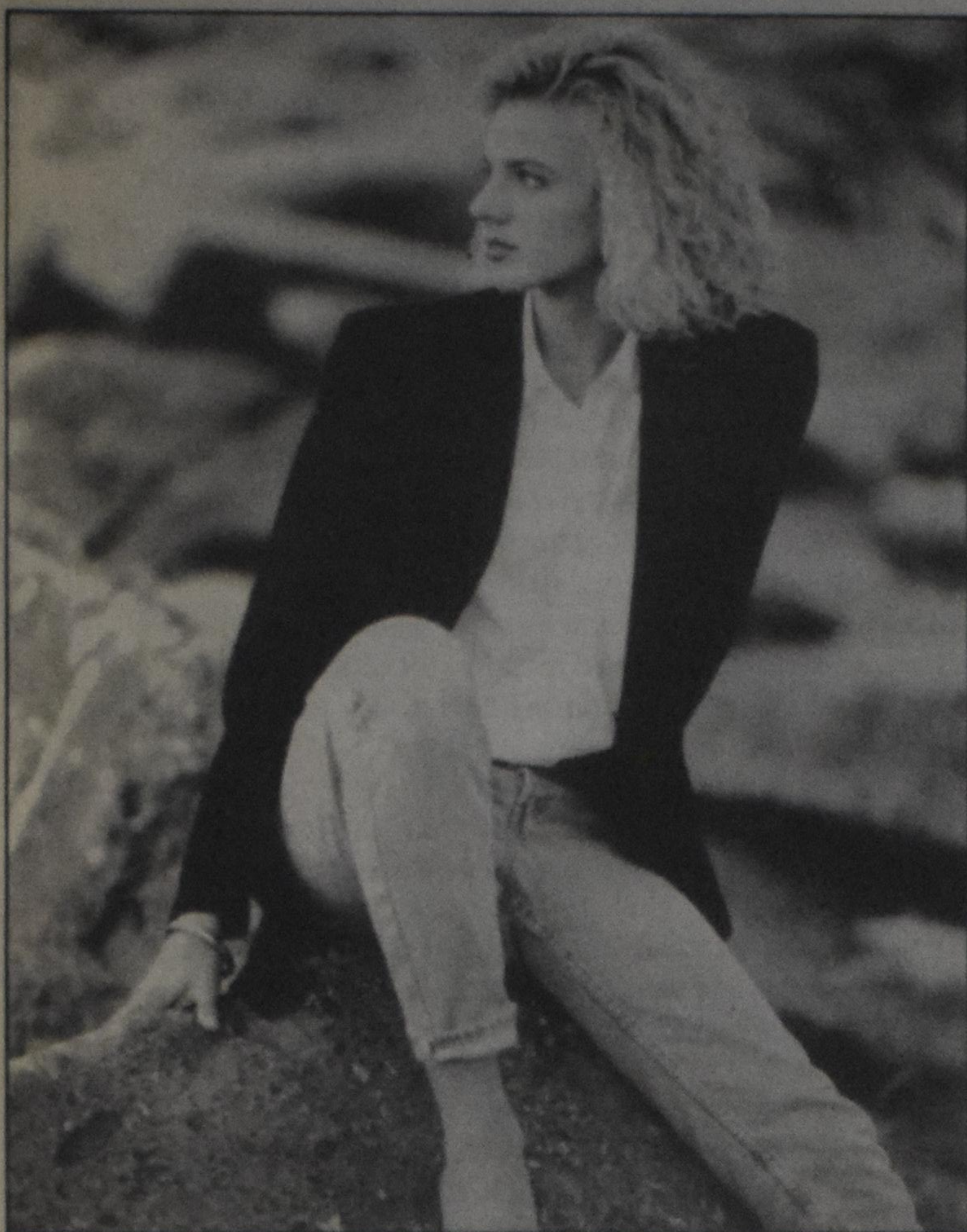


Photo: Tom Posthumus

Marlene Bergsma

Stephanie Posthumus of St. Catharines is long on modelling talent, looks and height. But the 17-year-old plans to make it a short-term career.

Stephanie Posthumus lies about her height.

No, she doesn't add an inch or two — she takes it off.

At six feet, one inch tall, "I usually say I'm 5-11," she says, because designers fear their clothes won't fit someone as tall as she is.

But the 17-year-old St. Catharines model, who appeared in the fashion spread of the February issue of *Canadian Living* magazine, was "discovered" because of her height.

She was shopping in St. Catharines last year when a sales clerk commented on her stature and suggested she contact a modelling agency in Toronto.

Stephanie dismissed the suggestion, but several months later, after being urged by her best friend, she made the phone call.

"They asked me, 'how tall are you?'," and, on hearing her answer, told her to "come in right away."

They liked her exotic features and her height, but no one gets taken on by an agency without modelling lessons — in this case \$1,000 for 52 hours of instruction.

Stephanie thought the steep price would automatically exclude her, but her parents — Tom and Jess — offered to help.

"My dad said, 'we'll pay for half, because later on in life you'll wish you'd done it,'" she said.

That was last year during March Break, and by July, she had her first job, modelling fur

coats for a Holt Renfrew Christmas flyer.

"We had fur coats and sweaters on, on the roof, in July," she says.

But in December, the tables were turned, and she was modelling mini skirts and crop tops in a draughty Toronto fire hall for the four-page *Canadian Living* fashion spread on "hot" looks.

Although Stephanie fits into size eight clothes with few problems ("sometimes the pants are too short") her height still causes complications for some people in the fashion industry.

"Photographers stand on stools or boxes, or they make me bend down," laughs Stephanie about the efforts to avoid creating the illusion that she's towering over the viewer.

Right now she's making most of her money modelling for catalogues — work that she would normally not qualify for because of her unusual facial features.

'I'm not beautiful'

"I'm not cute, I don't even think I'm beautiful. I just have features that look good in a camera...a strong jawline, a strong nose."

To compensate, Stephanie goes easy on make-up when she's doing what she calls "bread and butter" work.

"In a catalogue, they don't want you strong, they don't want your face. Your face is supposed to fade away," she explains.

Despite her early success, Stephanie has no intention of

making modelling a career.

"I always pictured models as being dippy, and I couldn't see myself fitting that stereotype," says the articulate teenager, whose mid-term Grade 12 average is 93 per cent.

Instead, she'll be accepting a scholarship for \$2,000 a year and heading off to a Christian college in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in September.

It's the same school her father, grandfather and several aunts and uncles went to, and she wants to follow in their footsteps because her family is important to her.

She is an only child, born to missionaries who were working in Nigeria — her mother as a nurse and her father as a teacher. The family moved to St. Catharines when Stephanie was four years old.

Her mother is now a hair-dresser who makes house calls for people — especially senior citizens — unable to get out. Jess also devotes much of her time to church work.

Level-headed attitude

Her father teaches science at the school Stephanie attends — Beacon Christian High School — and is also a leader in their

church, Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed.

Stephanie teaches Sunday School "I like kids, I really like kids, probably because I'm an only child."

Her goal is to have "a career ...and one or two children, and bring them up like I was brought up. I have really good parents."

Although her parents encourage and support her in her part-time job, they both admit to having been surprised she went so far, so fast.

When he saw the first professional photo of Stephanie, looking glamorous and sophisticated, "I said, 'Is that my daughter?'" says Tom Posthumus.

They're also glad she's got a level-headed attitude about her work.

"I know my life is definitely not revolving around modelling," says Stephanie.

"In modelling, it's really easy to get burnt out. I'm sick of it already," she admits.

"You feel like you're doing the same thing over and over again."

Some women love modelling, "It's their life dream...but Toronto is full of thousands of them, barely making it, barely paying the rent."

Marlene Bergsma is a reporter for The Standard in St. Catharines, Ont. Reprinted with permission from The Standard.



Paying for your children's education

Leonard Bick

When asked why they save money, respondents to financial surveys most often mention retirement. The next most common response is their children's education. The addition of a baby girl to my own family in the last year caused me to reconsider this area myself.

Informed sources estimate the typical cost for one year of university education in 1991 to be \$8,200. This includes tuition, personal and living expenses, books and other odds and ends.

By the time my youngest child attends university in the year 2009, the annual cost will be \$24,809 per year.

What would I have to invest today in one lump sum so that when the outpouring of money starts in 11 years, there will be enough? If I could earn 12 per cent and not pay income tax on it, I would need to put away \$73,000 today. If I could earn 15 per cent I would need to put away \$48,000. At 18 per cent returns, I would need to invest \$32,000 today to get the job done.

Since I don't have those kinds of lump sums available, I need to think in terms of a monthly savings program. To finance all five children's university education starting in 11 years I would have to make monthly contributions of \$919 per month assuming 12 per cent returns, \$665 per month assuming 15 per cent returns and \$482 per month assuming 18 per cent returns. Nobody said it was going to be easy.

If all my children attend a local university and live at home, the outlays will be less. They will also be able to contribute themselves by working during summers and perhaps part-time. However, as concerned parents, my wife and I would like to be in a position to provide as much support as possible to make further education possible.

Educational savings plan

The federal government has facilitated saving for education purposes through

legislation that created the Registered Educational Savings Plans (RESPs) in 1960.

Contributions are not tax deductible but the earnings do accumulate tax-free. The earnings become taxable in the beneficiary's (student's) hands when they are withdrawn. This does not generally cause a problem since a student typically does not earn enough to pay income tax.

Here are some other rules governing RESPs:

1. Contributions are limited to \$1,500 per year per beneficiary.
2. Current plan contributions will be capped at \$31,500 per beneficiary.
3. Payments from these plans can only go to beneficiaries if they are full-time students enrolled in qualifying educational programs at designated institutions.
4. Each plan has a maximum lifespan of 21 years.
5. If the designated beneficiary of the plan does not go on to school, then the accumulated earnings in the plan can be transferred to another beneficiary or ultimately to an educational institution.
6. The original contributions can be withdrawn from the plan by the contributor with no tax consequences.

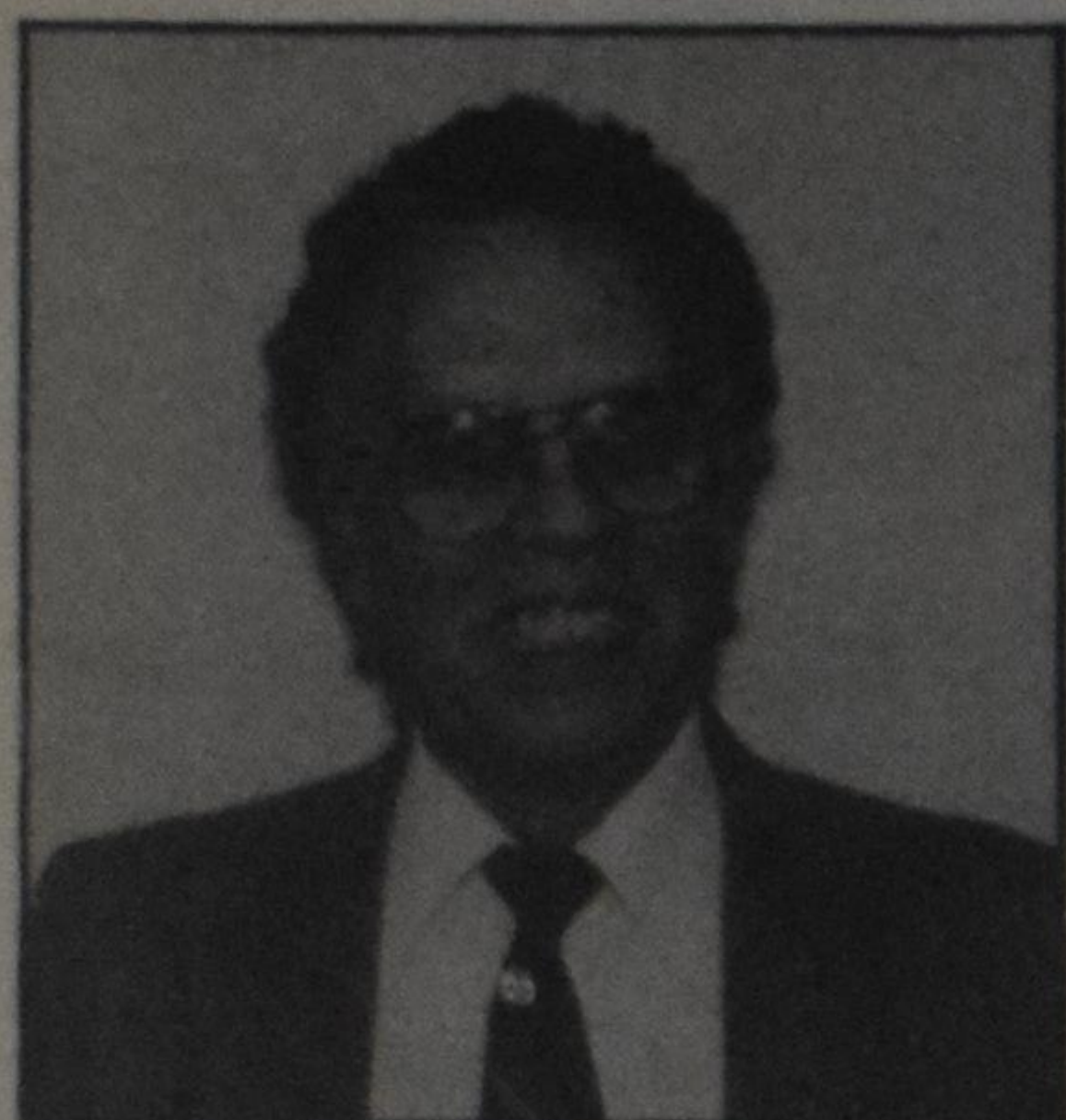
Investigate first

Keep in mind that different financial institutions have variations of RESPs. Some plans will not permit transferring to another beneficiary of your choice. Some plans will provide a wide range of investment selection while others provide one investment option.

The RESP is not the only way to accumulate money for education. Using a mutual fund that is primarily growth-oriented could provide a tax-effective way to earn higher returns. This assumes that you haven't used up the \$100,000 capital gains exemption. Careful evaluation of available mutual funds is recommended.

Leonard Bick is a financial planner who lives and works in Ancaster, Ont.

Labour/Politics



In and around the workplace

Ed Vanderkloet

Pay equity and inequity (2)

Ed Vanderkloet

One of the most controversial topics in labour relations is pay equity, i.e., laws that are designed to eliminate the wage gap between men and women. As I mentioned in my last column, much of this wage gap (on average women earn about 62 per cent of what men earn) is not due to sex discrimination. But some of it definitely is and why should we not try to eradicate it by means of legislation?

The Ontario *Pay Equity Act*, passed by the then Liberal government in 1987, forced employers in the public sector (to be followed by the private sector) to compare wages in female occupations with wages paid to male employees. If the skills and the work required were more or less equal and the female workers earned less than the males, the employer had to raise the pay levels of the former in order to achieve equality.

The principle of the new law was laudible enough and putting it into practice was not always terribly difficult. Many jobs and job classifications within a government branch or even in a private company can easily be compared. Why should nurses' aides work for less pay than the handyman who fixes the taps and mows the lawn?

No equal justice

Nevertheless, applying the new legal requirements caused major problems. First of all, a company had to raise female wages only when a "male comparator" could be found within the same establishment. This meant that, for example, in a nursing home in which there was no handyman or other male employee, things remained as they were, whereas in a similar institution down the street female wages went up simply because it happened to employ a "male comparator." Furthermore, a principal asset of any good law is that all people are equal before it. That's why we call it the rule of law. But the *Pay Equity Act* applied to females only. In other words, if the handyman in a school or hospital earned less than the females, his wages did not go up (nor did the women go down in pay.) So much for the stated intent of the new law, namely, to create equal pay for work of equal value. Is it any wonder that many people saw pay equity as a sop to the radical feminists? Obviously, equity was not very equitable; in fact, it created inequity.

How do you compare?

If forcing pay equity between males and females in the public sector (where competition plays hardly a role or none at all) poses major problems, just imagine what it means in the private sector. The formulae an employer must use (point systems for skill, education, and responsibility) are complex enough to intimidate a hardline *apparatchik* in the Kremlin. How do you compare the plumber's job with the secretary's work in the office of the same company? Both require certain qualifications that are indispensable, but devising a point system by which one can determine how much each should earn is a formidable task, to say the least. What do you do when the plumber gets laid off because the job is finished while the secretary stays on the payroll? How do you compare such apples and oranges? The pay equity plan was, it seems, hatched in the minds of politicians more obsessed with buying votes than finding realistic solutions for the inequities of society.

When the NDP under Bob Rae took over the reigns of government in Ontario last fall, business and labour watched intently what would happen. After all, pay equity was a major plank in the NDP platform. Let's see next time what Premier Bob and his government propose to do in eradicating wage discrimination on the basis of gender.

Ed Vanderkloet is a national representative for the Christian Labour Association of Canada.

Representing the people is not to be confused with governing

Nick Loenen

The following article is put together from excerpts of a speech given by British Columbia MLA Nick Loenen in B.C.'s Legislative Assembly on May 14, 1991. In his speech Loenen shares some of the frustrations he has experienced as a member of the House and he offers four solutions to the problems he has encountered.

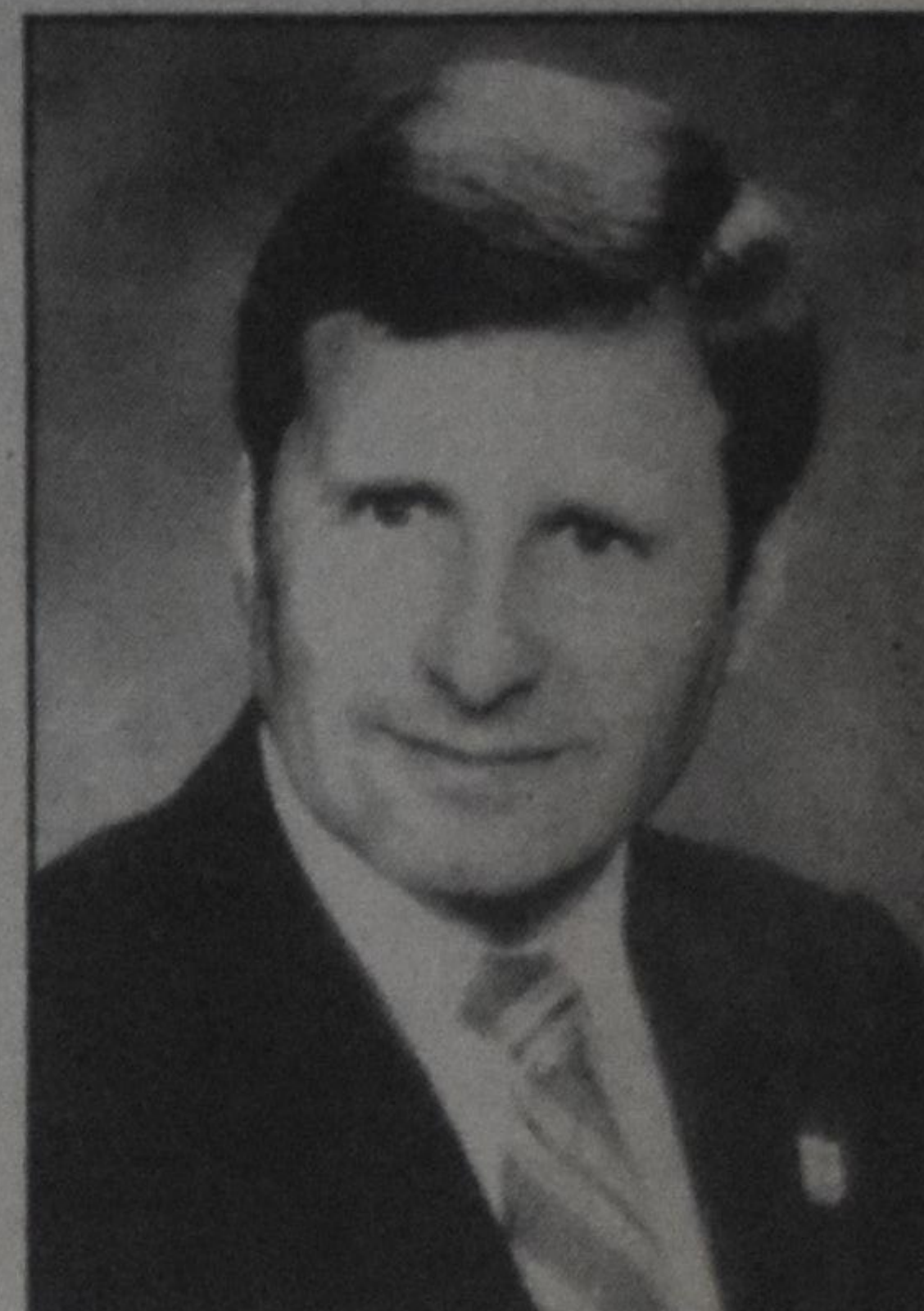


Photo: courtesy Nick Loenen
Nick Loenen

There is, as we all know, a tremendous amount of skepticism and cynicism, if not outright contempt, for politicians, parliament and the legislature. It's sad to see that. Perhaps as never before, we see among the people we represent a disillusionment as to what politicians and parliament are all about.

It's not merely that people are disillusioned with certain faces, certain names, certain people — the politicians themselves. It goes a lot deeper than that. They are disillusioned with the very institution of parliament. It's the very institution that we need to look at, address and think about. We've seen the Meech Lake impasse. We hear the discontent about regional disparities. There is no hope, no real trust.

There are at least two different ways of looking at parliament. Some look at it as a forum which promotes the public good, which somehow, in a disinterested fashion, stands above narrow partisan politics and special interests and looks after the interests of all people. These people are disappointed with the legislature because it seems that narrow self-interests, the narrow regional concerns, somehow always predominate.

Others look at parliament and our institutions of government as a means to deliver the goodies, to bring home for them what they would like to see for themselves. They, too, feel disillusioned because somehow there are always other special interests, other goodies, other regional or partisan interests that stand in the way.

On both counts we see a great deal of skepticism directed at the institution that is supposed

to deliver the public good.

The result is that we see a decline in the importance of political parties. People somehow do not identify with political parties as readily as all kinds of special interest groups and pressure groups. People join the Save the Farmland Society, or the Shaughnessy Residents Against Rapid Transit, or the Save the Whales Society, or this or that pressure group. All of us in public life are confronted daily by people who want something for themselves, whether it is farmers, fishermen, doctors, lawyers, senior citizens or single parents. They all want something for themselves or their particular little group....

Going to the people no panacea

There's a lot of talk right now that because parliament and legislatures and politicians are not doing their job, therefore we should go back to the people. Let the people decide through referenda, through constituency assemblies — whatever that means — and through initiatives of various kinds, or perhaps through recall. Give the power back to the people.

Now in some limited instances that is a good thing to do. But we have a long tradition of representative government and I do not believe that going back to the people is the panacea it's cracked up to be.

When there's something wrong with my car I go to a mechanic who's qualified and trained. When we sit in an airplane we hope that the person at the controls is an expert. I believe — and it may sound a little bit elitist — that we should be somewhat wary of this movement that thinks that if

only you go out and ask everyone's opinion then you will get a proper or the best result....

No genuine debate

I don't believe it's necessarily the case that going back to the grass roots is the answer, but I do believe that parliamentary reform is the answer. I came to the legislature after several years on local council and I became frustrated. At local council there is genuine debate; here there is no genuine debate. As someone said, a debate means that somebody talks and other people listen. We all talk here, but nobody listens. There is no genuine debate, and why should there be?

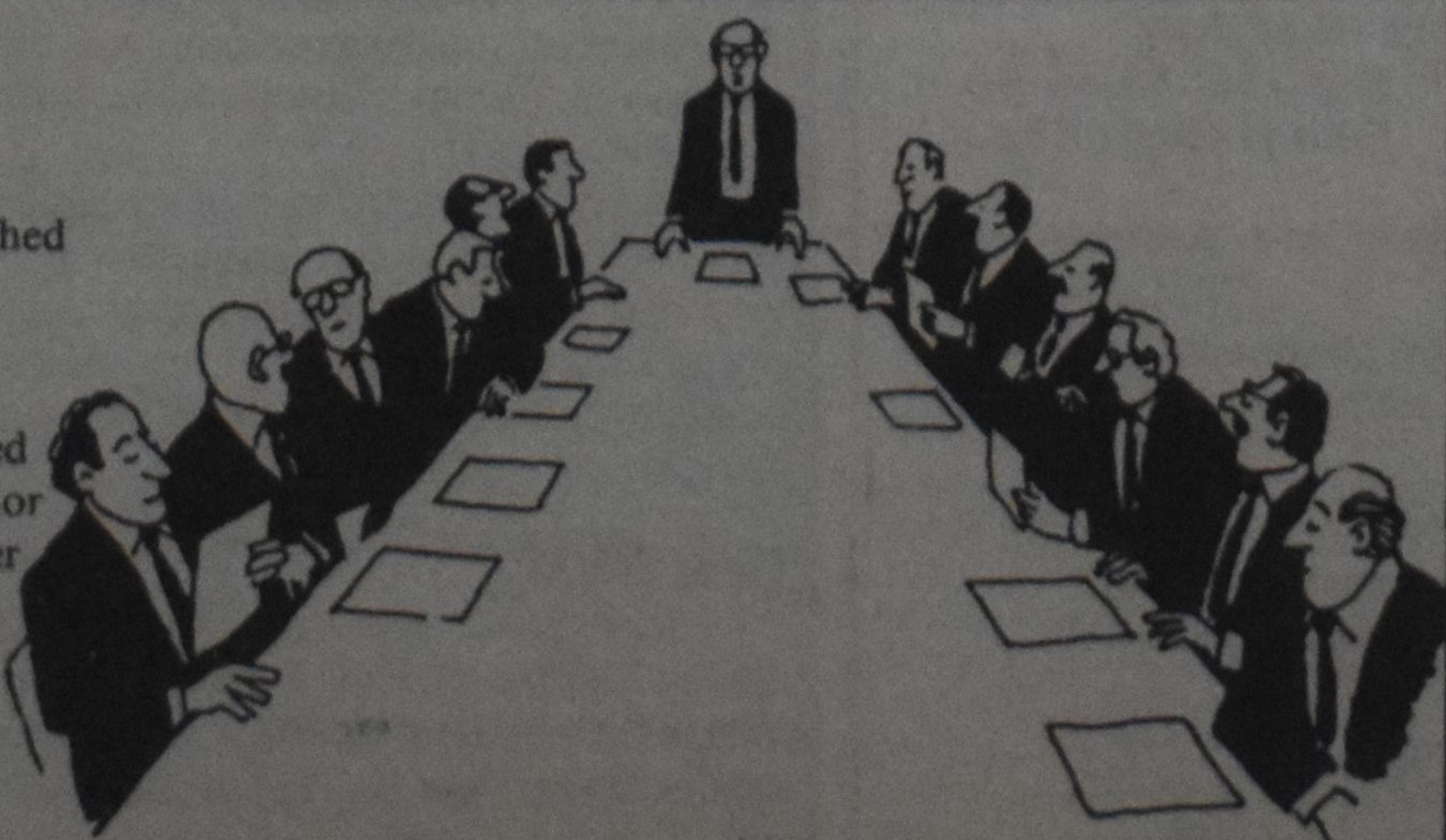
At least in a local council you go in and discuss the merits of an issue, hoping to persuade someone to see it your way and vote your way. Out here, everybody has decided beforehand how they are going to vote, so what is the sense of trying to appeal to good reason, or appealing to anyone? We just use this as a stage for a bit of theatre, but there is no real debate going on here. We all know that.

More British than the Brits

I want to propose four solutions: (1) we should have fixed election dates; (2) we should have fixed dates for the sittings of the House; (3) (3) between elections governments can be defeated only on a motion of confidence, and all other votes should be free votes; (4) committees of the House should be used, and used so as to permit public input.

Many people have suggested this, and it's certainly not new with me. The reason it has never been implemented is that it favours those who hold the reins of power. We know that; everybody knows that.

We are in some ways more British than the British,



"The committee on women's rights will now come to order." Huck/Funch/London

See POWER pg. 12...

Power should be properly distributed, says B.C. politician

...continued from page 11.

because Westminster, certainly since 1970, allows free votes to a much greater extent, and things run a lot better. That's what we should be doing here.

Under our system, a prime minister or premier holds far greater power within his respective jurisdiction than the President of the United States. That is wrong. Lord Acton's dictum is well known: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." We need to address the question of how much power there should be in cabinet, in the premier's office, and we need to address the role of the private members here.

Representatives should not govern

Nationally, we face some very serious constitutional problems. The events of the last six months within this province have shaken people's faith in this institution. We can address those issues, but it will require that the people who hold the reins of power address the issue of parliamentary reform in a way that will restore the faith and confidence of the people of this province.

As a private member I think we are often frustrated about our roles, particularly on the government side. We don't know what our roles are. In my opinion, ideally the role of the executive — that is, cabinet — is to be true to the oath of their office, to represent the public good in a disinterested and nonpartisan way, to do what is good for all. As private members, our role is to be a representative, an agent of the people who send us here. The system as it is now confuses those roles because we are co-opted into supporting whatever the government brings here, and as a result we can't do our job. But it's equally true that the job of cabinet is compromised by the fact that they have somehow lost sight of the fact that they should be disinterested and that they should be true to their office and the oath of their office.

I believe the kinds of proposals I have put forward

will more clearly define the distinctive roles of cabinet as well as those of the back bench, and will in fact ensure that this becomes a genuine debating chamber.

We're faced with an election soon, and I believe that no leader can go to the people and regain the people's confidence without addressing in a very dramatic way this whole question of the function and role of our governing institutions, namely this legislature. I firmly believe that unless a leader is willing to do that, that person does not deserve the trust of the people of this province.

The cabinet is the government

Since I have a few minutes, I'd like to draw attention to an excellent little book by Walter Lippman, *The Public Philosophy*, which discusses this at length. This was written in the 1950s but it's still relevant today, particularly in the discussion of the role of the executive as opposed to the representative role. Lippman writes as follows:

When we move over to the representative assembly, the image is different. The representative is in some very considerable degree an agent, and the image of his virtue is rather more like that of the lawyer than of the judge. In the general run of the mundane business which comes before the assembly, he is entitled — indeed he is duty-bound — to keep close to the interests and sentiments of his constituents and, within reasonable limits, to do what he can to support them. For it is indispensable to the freedom and the order of a civilized state that the votes should be effectively represented.

Now this is critical, the last sentence: *But representation must not be confused with governing.* I think too often in our setup here we confuse those two roles. We think — and I certainly did when I came here in '86 — that we're part of government. We're not. The

executive council is, not us. We have to fulfil that representative role, and that would allow those on the executive council to be more true to their oath of office.

In brief, I believe that in cabinet there is too much politics, and the way we have the setup right here, for the private members there's not

enough politics.

Nick Noenen is a member of the Social Credit caucus and represents a riding in Richmond, B.C.

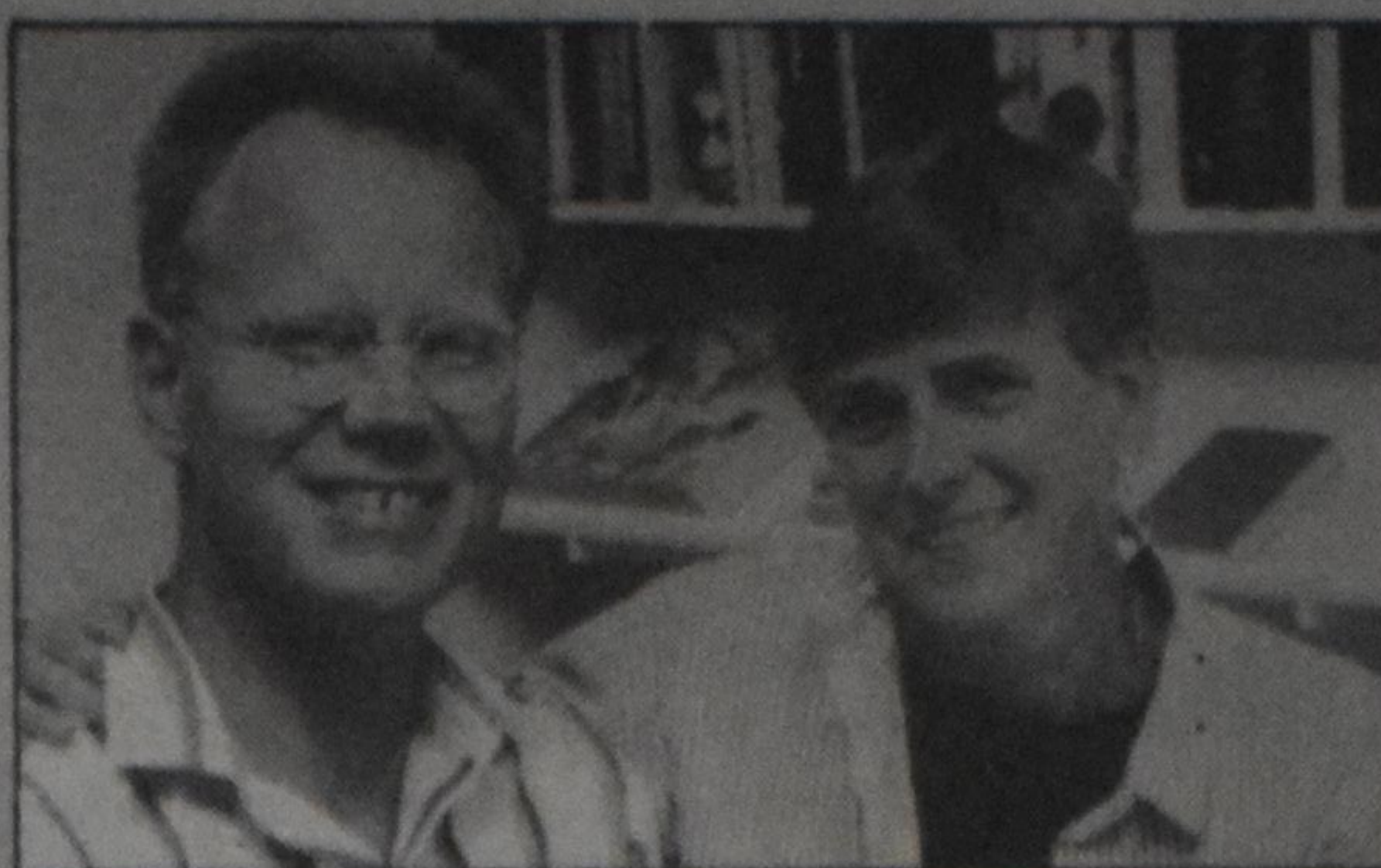


Photo: David Van Dyke

Peter and Marja are



Dear P & M:

We've been married about one year. I'm 24 and my wife is 21. I get frustrated because she doesn't want to get out to work. We both don't want children for three years and I don't make a great amount of money. I grew up in an ambitious Dutch-immigrant family and my parents are well off. My wife grew up in a laid-back family and she is just content to stay home and clean house. What can we do?

Dear Frustrated Newlywed:

Yours is a classic case of opposites attracting each other. Her laid-back family and her easy-going nature were the perfect antidote to your ambitious parents and your hard-working approach to life. Ironically, you are now frustrated by some of these things that probably drew you to her in the first place.

Stop trying to change her into something that she's not. Accept her for who she is and appreciate what she brings to your marriage. Certainly her set of values is somewhat different than yours. But you can still celebrate what she does to make your house a home.

We don't want to imply that she does not need to grow and develop the gifts that God has given her. All of us do! Encouragement and appreciation will bring this about sooner than criticism and frustration. Compliment her for the things that she does well.

Stop comparing her and your financial situation to your parents and their affluent lifestyle. In subtle ways she may feel threatened or overwhelmed by your family, especially if she is somewhat shy and lacking in confidence.

You should doublecheck your assumption that both of you want to wait with having children. Your wife's goals, at this point in her life, may be limited to starting a family and maintaining a household. Don't be disappointed in her if that's the case; these are worthwhile goals. But you need to talk it out.

We have lots of questions that your letter does not address. Did she work before you were married? Did she lose a job and is she depressed? Does she have low self-esteem and is she afraid to apply for work? During your courtship did you set some career and family goals? Are there other issues between you or in either of your lives that are getting in the way? Can the two of you communicate honestly and express your feelings in a manner that builds up your relationship?

A few sessions with a counsellor could be very beneficial at this early stage in your marriage. Some fresh insights into your relationship could give both of you a way to celebrate rather than resent the differences you bring to your relationship.

Dear P & M:

I just can't hold down a job. I've had 14 in the last 20 years. Employers make up excuses to fire me but won't tell me why. I'm a 39-year-old male and single. I feel like a failure. Can you help?

Dear Fired Again:

You say you don't know why you keep getting fired. Often we do know why but we just won't admit it. You have to own your problem and seek help once you've identified it.

Go back to two or three employers with whom you had a relatively good relationship and honestly ask them why you were a poor employee. Reassure them that you won't take them to the Human Rights Commission; you are only interested in doing some soul searching and you value their input. This assignment will take a lot of courage on your part. All of us find it extremely difficult to open ourselves up to criticism. Yet you need to get to the bottom of this recurring problem. Remember that you also have a legal right to know why you were fired.

We especially urge you to get some career counselling. This is available free of charge at any Canada Employment Centre. When you state your difficulty at the front desk, you will be referred to a counsellor who will work one-on-one with you. Together you will try to discover where things go wrong and why you can't hold down a job. You may have been in work situations which were over your head or under your skills. You may be lacking in some basic job maintenance skills, such as resolving interpersonal conflict, arriving on time, or proper work habits and attitudes. Canada Manpower is also equipped to do some diagnostic testing which evaluates you in terms of abilities, interests and temperament.

When we spoke with a counsellor at the Employment Centre, we asked whether or not your situation was uncommon. We were assured that you do not have to be embarrassed when presenting yourself at Canada Manpower because they deal with this sort of thing on a regular basis. In fact, the counsellor was impressed with the fact that you took the initiative to write.

People who seek out advice and help have a greater success rate than those who don't. Your willingness to write is a major step in the right direction. As Proverbs 12:15 says, "The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice."

So be willing to listen; be willing to make changes. Your feelings of failure are understandable, but God has also gifted you with certain talents that need to be developed, used and appreciated.

Write to: P & M
c/o Calvinist Contact
4-261 Martindale Rd.
St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of: Sam Da Silva, Ineke Brouwer-Parlevliet, Tom Zeyl, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.



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<p>GST Inclusive</p> <p>Births..... \$35.00</p> <p>Marriages & Engagements. \$40.00</p> <p>Anniversaries..... \$45.00</p> <p>2-column anniversaries.... \$90.00</p> <p>Obituaries..... \$45.00</p> <p>Notes of thanks..... \$35.00</p> <p>Birthdays..... \$35.00</p> <p>All other one-column classified advertisements: \$13.50 per column inch. NOTE: Minimum fee is \$25.00. Letter under file number, \$35.00 extra. Photos: \$25.00 additional charge. (Free when published with anniversary announcement celebrating 50 years or more.)Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive.</p> <p>ATTENTION!</p> <p>a) <i>Calvinist Contact</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format, <i>unless you instruct us otherwise.</i></p> <p>b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is <i>not</i> acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.</p> <p>c) Photographs sent by fax are <i>not</i> acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.</p> <p>d) <i>Calvinist Contact</i> will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.</p> <p>e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to six column inches. <i>Calvinist Contact</i> reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of \$13.50 per column inch (GST inclusive).</p> <p>NEWLYWEDS</p> <p>Non-subscribing newlyweds whose wedding announcement with their future address appears in <i>Calvinist Contact</i> will receive a letter offering a first-year subscription for only \$20.00 (GST inclusive)! To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request and pay for the wedding announcement to enclose \$20.00 and the couple's future address.</p> <p>Calvinist Contact Publishing Ltd. 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Phone: (416) 682-8311 Fax: (416) 682-8313</p>	<p>EGGINK: We thank everyone for the many cards and good wishes on our 50th wedding anniversary. We thank especially our children and grandchildren for the much love and work they put into our celebration. Above all we thank our Father in heaven that he was with us all these years. Geert and Henny Eggink</p> <p>LYCKLAMA à NYEHOLT: Our thanks to our family and friends who celebrated with us our 50th wedding anniversary, and a special thanks for the cards and flowers received. Above all we thank our heavenly Father for his care on our life's pathway, and for making this all possible. Yours truly, James and Wilma Lycklama à Nye-holt.</p> <p>WYMENGA: <i>Soli Deo Gloria.</i> Thanks to all who made our 55th wedding anniversary such a beautiful memory for us. Thanks to all our children, grand- and great-grandchildren, relatives and friends for the many cards, phone calls, flowers, etc. Above all, thanks to the Lord for all his blessings and faithfulness which we've received through all these years. May the Lord bless you all. Ray and Susan Wymenga</p>	<p>HOLMAN: With thanks to our heavenly Father, Mr. and Mrs. Klaas D. Holman wish to announce the birth of our 8th grandchild, KEVIN JACOB born on April 8, 1991, weighing 9 lbs. 6½ oz. Proud parents are Fred and Angie Holman of Melbourne, Ont. A little brother for Crystal and April.</p> <p>Marriages</p> <p>BOVENBERG-VAN STAALDUINEN: Mr. and Mrs. Harry Bovenberg of Huttonville, Ont., are happy to announce the forthcoming marriage of their youngest daughter, INGRID GRACE to ROBIN JOHN the oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Van Staalduinen of Burlington, Ont. The ceremony will take place, D.V., on Saturday, June 22, 1991, at four o'clock p.m. in the Second Chr. Ref. Church, Brampton, Ont., Pastor Peter Nicolai officiating. For they have experienced love in God, their parents and friends, and now a new love in each other. Future address: 2530 Northampton Blvd., Unit 31, Burlington, ON L7M 4B4</p> <p>SMIT-MILLER: With the blessings of our heavenly Father, we are as one. Therefore there is joy. The nearer we keep to him, the nearer we will be to one another. Clarence and Thea Smit and Daniel and Lillian Miller share in the joy of announcing the marriage of their children, SUZANNE RAMONA and ROBERT WILLIAM on Saturday, June 22, 1991, at 10:30 in the morning, the Lord willing, at Cedarview Community Church, 925 Davis Drive, Newmarket, Ont., Pastor Ron Dempster officiating. Future address: 177 Park View Crescent, Newmarket, ON L3Y 2C9</p>	<div></div> <p><i>Congratulations to Albert and Jantina Bisschop on the occasion of their 65th wedding anniversary!</i></p> <p>It is with thankful hearts that we celebrate the 65th wedding anniversary of</p> <p>ALBERT and JANTINA BISSCHOP On Monday, June 17, 1991. May our heavenly Father continue to keep you safely sheltered in his loving arms. With much love from all your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. <i>'k Wil U, o God! mijn dank betalen, U prijzen in mijn avondlied; Het zonlicht moge nederdalen, Maar Gij, mijn Licht! begeeft mij niet; Gij woudt mij met Uw gunst omringen, Meer dan een vader zorgt Gij; Gij, milde Bron van zegeningen! Zulke een Ontfermer waart Gij mij. Ik weet, aan wien ik mij vertrouwde, Al wisselen ook dag en nacht; Ik ken de rots, waarop ik bouwe, Hij feilt niet, die Uw Heil verwacht. Eens, aan den avond van mijn leven, Breng ik, van zorg en strijden moe, Voor elken dag, mij hier gegeven, U hooger, reiner loflied toe.</i> Home address: 1415 Upper Wellington, Apt. #109, Hamilton, ON L9A 5E8</p>	<p>1931 May 21 1991</p> <p>JAKOB and BEITSKE WESTERHOF We are thankful to the Lord for giving 60 years of marriage to our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to surround them with his love and uphold them in his everlasting arms. With love and congratulations from your children: Frank — Hillier John & Grace — Cherry Valley Leo & Helen — Brighton Walter & Helen — Collingwood Henry — Whitby 18 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren. Correspondence address: 118-193 North Park St., Belleville, On K8P 3C8</p> <p>Beetsterzwaag, Brampton Friesland Ontario 1941 May 27 1991 "And Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding" (John 2:2). With praise and thanksgiving to our Lord, we announce the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents:</p> <p>WYBE (Bill) and AUKIEN (Alice) ZEYL (Nee Agema) We trust that the Lord will continue to hold you both in the palm of his hand. A family celebration was held on May 25, 1991. Their thankful children: Jack & Christel Zeyl — Dundas, Ont. William, Kirsten, Trevor Don & Judy Zeyl — Kingston, R.I., U.S.A. Jonathan, Jennifer Jim & Alice Zeyl — London, Ont. Leanna, Jeremy, Timothy, Jeffrey Tom & Lydia Zeyl — Smithville, Ont. Derek, David, Thomas, Jonathan John & Netty Zeyl — Woodstock, Ont. Jessica, Denise, Matthew, Eric Home address: Holland Christian Homes, 7900 McLaughlin Rd. S., Covenant Tower, # P.H. 03, Brampton, ON L6V 3N2</p> <p>Vacation WASAGA BEACH Still looking for a great holiday? Come to Alton Lodges and enjoy our nine miles of sandy beach. Safe swimming for everyone. One- and two-bedroom housekeeping cottages. Give us a call at (705) 429-2420. Your hosts: Len and Rita Bette, Alton Lodges, R.R. #1, Site 130, Box 8, Wasaga Beach, ON L0L 2P0.</p> <p>Vacation Two bedroom furnished apartment for rent, above garage, in the Hamilton area. Available by the week. Please call (416) 628-8507.</p> <p>More anniversaries on next page</p>

Classified

Anniversaries	Anniversaries	Obituaries	Teacher	Teacher
		<p>"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (see 2 Cor. 4:16-5:10).</p> <p>At Shalom Manor, Grimsby, Ont., on Wednesday, May 22, 1991, the Lord called unto himself</p> <p>CORNELIUS VERMEER</p> <p>In his 85th year.</p> <p>Beloved husband of the late Trinette Vermeer (nee Havenaar).</p> <p>Dear father of:</p> <p>Annie & Piet Boekestyn — the Neth. Bill & Mieke Vermeer — Grimsby, Ont.</p> <p>Shirley & John Bergshoeff — Grimsby, Ont.</p> <p>Ben & Bertha Vermeer — Dunnville, Ont.</p> <p>Abe & Liz Vermeer — Grimsby, Ont.</p> <p>Dick & Mary Vermeer — Grimsby, Ont.</p> <p>Janette & Joe Schaafsma — Victoria, B.C.</p> <p>John & Helen Vermeer — Ancaster, Ont.</p> <p>Loving grandfather of 33 grandchildren and 44 great-grandchildren. Predeceased by his son Simon Vermeer.</p> <p>The funeral service was held at Mountainview Chr. Ref. Church, Grimsby, Ont., on Friday, May 24, 1991, the Rev. P.W. De Bruyne officiating.</p> <p>Correspondence address: Shirley & John Bergshoeff, 4A Oriole Cr., Grimsby, ON L3M 3X4</p>	<p>HOUSTON, B.C.: Houston Christian School, located in the beautiful Bulkley Valley of north central B.C. has 3 Elementary teaching positions open. Please address all inquiries to Mr. Doyle Smiens, Principal, Box 237, Houston, B.C. Phone (604) 845-7736.</p>	<p>TERRACE, B.C.: Centennial Christian School thanks all those who applied to teach at our school. All positions have now been filled. We thank our Lord for this blessing, and look forward to the new school year.</p>
			Help Wanted	Help Wanted
			<p>SEEKING A PASTOR</p> <p>The Christian Reformed Church of St. Albert, Alta., a congregation of 60 families, will be vacant at the end of June 1991. We are seeking a new pastor to lead us in worship and congregational life. A church profile is available upon request.</p> <p><i>For information contact:</i></p> <p>Bud Brink (403) 458-3091, or</p> <p>Albert Stol 57 Springfield Cr. St. Albert, AB T8N 0J9 Phone: (403) 458-6578</p>	
			<div><p>GEERTSMA CONSTRUCTION LTD.</p><p>P.O. BOX 1226, BELLEVILLE, ONTARIO K8N 5E9</p><p>ESTIMATOR wanted for bidding on ICI Design Build, General Contract projects ranging up to 5M, with additional skills in project management, design and drafting. Please forward resume in confidence to Andy Geertsma.</p></div>	
			For Sale	For Sale
			<p>For sale:</p> <p>THRIVING BAKERY AND RESIDENCE — (Dutch Bakery) — Bakery, all equipment and chattels, goodwill, established two generations. Sales over \$200,000. List \$298,000. St. Catharines, Ont. Call G.L. Betts Real Estate Ltd. (416) 641-1700.</p>	
			Vacation	Vacation
			<div><p>LANG'S RESORT Cottages and campgrounds RICE LAKE</p><p>Like fishing the big ones? Fully-equipped large (newly-renovated) housekeeping cottages — colour TV, sandy bathing area, rec. hall, new boats and motors, store, live bait, fishing ilc., campsites available for weekend, week, or season. Like a clean quiet resort. It's all here at the family place. Before you book your '91 vacation, take a drive and see our new look. Only 83 miles from Toronto. Write or phone for brochure: Lang's Resort R.R.#3, Box C, Roseneath, ON K0K 2X0 Phone: (416) 352-2308 Fax: (416) 352-2308</p></div>	
			<p>ATTENTION:</p> <p>If you are considering sending us an ad via fax, please be sure to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. send printed or typed copy2. include billing address3. include contact person with phone number	



Congratulations to Arie and Cora Groenevelt (nee Koedot) on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary!

"En Jesus was ook genood tot de bruiloft" (John 2:2).
Rotterdam, the Neth. 1941
Bracebridge, Ont. 1991
Congratulations to

ARIE and CORA GROENEVELT
(nee Koedot)

We wish to invite you to celebrate our parents' 50th wedding anniversary, D.V., June 5, 1991, on June 8, 1991, with an open house at their home, 89 Alice St., Bracebridge, Ont. from 1-4 p.m.

From your children and grandchildren: Our sincerest love and best wishes for many more!

Art & Marja Groenevelt
Cori, Dennis
Gerrit Groenevelt
Lucas
Nancy Morbey
Jennifer, Geoffrey, Yolanda
Bas & Margaret Groenevelt
John, Robert, Stephen

Help Wanted

Church administrator, half-time position. For detailed job description contact Forestview Community Church, 4-6 Ontario St., Grimsby, ON L3M 3G9, Tel.: (416) 945-9529.

For Sale

Evangelistic Materials in Arabic

Also, in English, *The Bible and Islam* \$4.95 Canada / \$3.95 U.S. and a folder of essays on Understanding the Middle East (\$1.50).

Write:
The Back to God Hour
P.O. Box 5070
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8

For sale: 31-ft. Prowler trailer with pull-out and awning, patio doors, like new. Located at Little Europe Resort, Bracebridge, Ont. Phone: (416) 648-7817.

Help Wanted

Urgently required: **Counterhelp** for Thu.-Fri. & Saturday. "Gezellige" job for the right person who is preferably bi-lingual (English-Dutch) and who enjoys meeting people. Apply at Spool's, "De warme bakker," 447 Speers Rd., Oakville, Ont. (416) 338-1294; Eve.: (416) 338-7039.

Employment wanted

Position wanted: Experienced administrator and teacher. 27-year elementary-university experience. Want to work in a Christian education setting. Relevant subject areas: Social Sciences, Geography/history, Guidance/Counselling, Physical Education, Coaching. Permanent Alberta and Saskatchewan Teaching Certificates. Ph.D. from Colorado State University. Contact (306) 254-4456 or (306) 249-3360. Fax: (306) 249-1933. Dr. Hylke (Hike) van der Wal. Will relocate.

Teachers

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.: Abbotsford Christian School's rapidly expanding system (925 students, K-12, 3 campuses) is seeking a **full-time** and a **part-time Elementary French Specialist** teacher. Send application, resume and references to: Mr. Henry Contant, Principal, Abbotsford Chr. School, Elementary Campus, Box 175, Abbotsford, B.C. V2S 4N8, or call (604) 859-5167; Fax #859-9995.

GEORGETOWN, Ont.: Georgetown District Chr. School. Because of increased enrolment in Kindergarten, we have a possible opening for a 60 per cent teacher aid with E.C.E. training. For information or application please contact Treena Sybersma Principal, R.R. #1, Georgetown, ON L7G 4S4 or phone: (416) 877-4221.

SASKATOON, Sask: Saskatoon Christian School (Grades K-8) invites applications for the following positions for the 1991/92 school year: 1) 1 **part-time French** teacher (26%); 2) a potential position for a **middle years** classroom teacher. Interested applicants please forward resume and/or inquiries to: Saskatoon Chr. School, 2410 Haultain Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7J 1R3. Tel.: (306) 343-1494 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. or after 3:30 p.m.

Events

FRISIAN PICNIC

on Monday, July 1, 1991, starting at 11 a.m. at Pinehurst Conservation Park in Paris, Ont., Hwy. 24A

Fun for everyone!!

With thanks to God you are invited to celebrate in the retirement of 40 years in the ministry of

REV. JACOB KUNTZ

Dinner & Program

on June 22, 1991, at 5:30 p.m.
Woodland Christian High School
R.R. #1, Breslau, Ont.
Tickets are \$14.00 per person.

Contact: Olga & Arend Steenbeek,
92 Pinedale Dr.,
Kitchener, ON N2E 1J7
(519) 579-0082

*With praise and thanksgiving to God,
the Board of Sarnia Christian School
is pleased to recognize our principal,*

MR. PETER WEENING

*for 25 years of faithful service
in Christian Education.*

In honour of this anniversary
an Open House will be held

Tuesday, June 11, 1991 at
SARNIA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
1273 Exmouth St., Sarnia

7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. PROGRAM
8:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. OPEN HOUSE

*All former students and colleagues
are cordially invited to celebrate with us!*

Weekly puzzle

by Robert Lieblich

ACROSS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Vegetative state													
5 Acting award													
10 Nonchalant													
14 Wading birds													
15 Daughter in Lyon													
16 Antique "antique"													
17 Cook's contribution													
19 Seemly													
20 Prior to													
21 Gather													
22 Bruts about													
24 Lewis or Reiner													
25 — Harri													
26 Neckwear													
29 Took back													
33 Tired out													
34 Shlepp													
35 Salesman's car													
36 Edible root													
37 Egged on													
38 Leprechaun land													
39 Mangle													
40 Requisite													
41 Seed coat													
42 String on finger e.g.													
44 Extreme pressure													
45 Well-ventilated													
46 Some bills													
47 Starlight lady													
50 Br. composer													
51 Sandy's comment													
54 Dry gulch													
55 Magazine													
58 Fires													
59 Choose													
60 Stupor													
61 Shade													
62 Quench													
63 Cutting tool													

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Last week's puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14												
17												
20												
26												
33												
36												
39												
42												
47												
54												
58												
61												

- DOWN
- 1 Relinquish
2 Tentmaker
3 Urania e.g.
4 Residue
5 Volunteers
6 Cordage fiber
7 Explosive sound
8 Everyone
- 9 Went over again
10 Takes by force
11 Margarine
12 River to Baltic Sea
13 Rents out
18 Speechify
23 Actress Hagen
24 Clive in India e.g.
25 Gave out
26 Up and about
27 Gaze
28 Billiards shot
29 Pilot's response
30 Pithy
31 Sends out
32 Sp. gentiowomen
34 Like forests
37 Removes covers
41 Properly pitched
43 Nothing whatsoever
44 Betoken
- 46 Feat of legerdemain
47 Smack
48 Run the runway
49 Sir Anthony
50 Territory
- 51 Sch. type
52 Heckle
53 Escape
56 45 inches
57 Mountain in Crete

Calendar of Events

June 7	Concert by "Acappella" (from Paris, Tennessee) at 7:30 p.m., Covenant CRC, St. Catharines, Ont. For tickets and info. call Martin Lensink (416) 937-1078 or Eileen Vanden Bogert (416) 934-4327.	June 15	"Grunneger Picnic," at 10 a.m., Grand River Conservation Area, Rockwood, Ont.
June 8	Mariahout-Lieshout (the Netherlands) Town Reunion, will be held at Erin, Ont. Join the festivities! Call (416) 224-5211.	June 19	RCBPO Fifth Annual All-Ontario Golf Tournament. For info. call (416) 524-1203.
June 12	"De Hollandse Dag in Moorefield," in the Community Centre, Moorefield, Ont. Starts at 10 a.m. Speaker: Rev. J.G. Klomps.	June 20	CFFO Provincial Board meets at Hillcrest United Church, Hornby, Ont. (Trafalgar Rd., just north of Hwy. 401).
June 14	CCM (Clàssis Chatham) meets at 8 p.m., Bethel CRC, London, Ont. Speaker: Rev. Jerry Van Dyk on "Analysis: Creation/Science Report CRC Synod 1991."	June 21-22	"Rumours of Glory: Bruce Cockburn & Christian Faith in a post-modern world." At ICS, Toronto, Ont. This seminar will be led by J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh. For registration call (416) 979-2331.
June 14	CCM (Kitchener Chapter) meets at 8 p.m., Faith Missionary Church, Kitchener, Ont. Speaker: Rev. J.M. Julien on the Belgic Confession.	June 22	"Celebration of Service." Closing ceremony for Toronto Central Christian School, 7:30 p.m., Forward Baptist Church, Toronto, Ont. For info. call Dian Hofstra at (416) 443-0064.
June 15	RCBPO Hamilton Halton Chapter meets at 7:45 p.m. at the Ebenezer Can. Ref. Church. Speaker: Clarence Boonstra. For info. call (416) 524-1203.	June 26	Annual picnic of "The Cypress Gardens Winter Ministry," at 10 a.m., Bronte Creek Provincial Park (take exit 109 off QEW). Bring lunch!
June 15	The "Wapenbroeders" — "Dutch Canadian Legion" — have their Annual Meeting in the Seniors Hall in Alton, Alton Side Rd. Starts 10:00 a.m. For information call: Bert Verwey, 416-522-2376.	July 1	Frison picnic starting at 11 a.m. at Pinehurst Conservation Park in Paris, Ont. Hwy. 24A. Fun for everyone!!
June 15	Heather & Helen in concert, 7:30 p.m., Calvin CRC, Ottawa, Ont. Admission at the door (portion of proceeds to CRWRC).	July 3	"De Hollandse Dag in Mount Brydges," at 10 a.m., Caradoc Community Centre, Mount Brydges, Ont. Speaker: Rev. J. Joosse. Bring lunch!
		July 5-6	"The People and the Book: Christian Origins and the N.T.," a conference at ICS, Toronto, Ont. Speaker NT scholar N. Thomas Wright of Oxford University. For registration call (416) 979-2331.

Accommodations



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Now's the time to make your selection for immediate occupancy! Let us explain the choices available to you or your loved ones... SATURDAYS 1:00 - 4:00

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For information call: (416) 768-5239 or (519) 587-5696
Townsend, Ontario

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Miscellaneous

**Kerkdiensten op cassette
in de Nederlandse taal**

U kunt zich nu abonneren op deze preken dienst, b.v.:

- a) één cassette iedere week;
- b) twee cassettes maandelijks;
- c) één cassette maandelijks.

Prijs \$3,00 per cassette
(\$1,50 extra als u de cassette wilt houden)

Voor inlichtingen schrijf naar:

Jack & Lenie Brouwer
27 Alpaca Drive
Scarborough, ON
M1J 2Z8
of bel (416) 431-7792

**Luister naar het programma
ZINGEND GELOVEN**
Elke Zaterdag, 8 uur 's morgens
CHIN FM 101

Calvin College

Calvin College remains open for freshmen and transfer admission to the Fall 1991 semester. Financial aid and housing is also available. Students wishing to apply should call the Admissions Office at 1-800-688-0122 (Canada)

Reflecting and Affecting God's Kingdom



Books

Robert VanderVennen, book review editor

Ordination of women

Bridge over troubled water?

A Cause for Division? Women in Office and the Unity of the Church, by John W. Cooper. Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1991. 61 pp. \$4.75. Available through CRC Publications, Burlington, Ont. or Grand Rapids, Mich. Reviewed by George Vandervelde, senior member of systematic theology at the Institute for Christian studies, Toronto.

In the Christian Reformed Church the issue of the ordination of women has taken shape as a battle for the Bible — its authority and interpretation. This is not to deny that other factors — assumptions and attitudes about men and women, for example — play a crucial role. At times they may, in fact, be decisive. Nevertheless, the issue of biblical authority and interpretation is centre-stage.

“Cooper adamantly opposes any suggestion that biblical passages on the role of women in the church are relevant only for Paul’s time.”

Opponents of women’s ordination charge that the proponents are undermining the authority of the Bible. When this is officially sanctioned, a church sinks in the quagmire of subjectivism and relativism.

In the midst of these angry waves and swirling currents and counter-currents lands a booklet entitled *A Cause for Division?*, written by John Cooper and published by Calvin Theological Seminary, where he teaches.

Cooper adamantly opposes any suggestion that biblical passages on the role of women in the church are relevant only for Paul’s time and can therefore safely be ignored in ours. As a book of salvation, the Scriptures are relevant and normative for all of life, for all time. The issue is, *how* do the Pauline passages on the role of women apply today?

How do the Pauline passages apply?

To answer that question, Cooper appeals to time-honoured and -tested rules of traditional Reformed hermeneutics (principles and

rules of interpretation). He first indicates how, on the basis of this hermeneutic a case can be made *against* the ordination of women in some or all offices in the church. Proceeding from an equally high view of Scriptures and employing the same rules and principles, he then presents a case *for* the ordination of women.

One of the principles of Reformed hermeneutics demands that passages not be read in isolation. To rightly interpret a particular passage, it must be understood within the overall context of the Scriptures. Cooper sets the passages on the role of women within the overarching theme of the creation of men and women together as God’s image. As his representatives, they are mutually blessed with the mandate to have dominion. In Christ, this design is restored and continues to be restored.

With respect to 1 Tim. 2, to take only one example, Cooper makes a case for distinguishing between principle and application. This is precisely what we do with the immediate context. When Paul forbids the wearing of gold or enjoins men “everywhere” to lift holy hands in prayer, we do not regard this as an injunction that holds for all time. Yet we don’t thereby consider ourselves to be guilty of undermining the authority of Scripture. We do not declare such passages to be irrelevant. With respect to jewelry, dress, and hair styles, Paul’s concern is modesty. With respect to prayer, he is concerned about appropriate expressions of piety.

Similarly, Cooper argues that in 1 Tim. 2:2 Paul is concerned about the proper relationship between husbands and wives. Accordingly, Paul’s appeal to the creation of man and woman as husband and wife as described in Genesis 2 (Adam was created first) and to the fall (Eve was deceived) presents grounds for this relationship. The prohibition is an *application* of that

basic and abiding principle. Whether that specific application holds for all time cannot be settled simply by an appeal to this passage. By carefully considering key factors (for example, other passages allowing women to prophesy; the precise meaning of the unusual term for “authority,” the cultural context), Cooper concludes that fully honouring this inspired Scripture does not prohibit the ordination of women today.

Read it prayerfully

This booklet will not likely transform all opponents of women’s ordination into proponents. There will be disagreement about the precise meaning of “authority” in 1 Tim. 2:12, its connection with “teaching” — or “preaching,” the relationship of all this to particular understandings of “ordination” (which is a historically freighted term, perhaps functioning as a funnel for the rich biblical notions of ministry), and the relationship between biblical principle and application. People will continue to disagree regarding interpretation and its present implications. The question is whether such disagreement is sufficient cause to split the church — with the untold damage such division does to the cause of Christ now and for the next generation.

Cooper’s answer is clearly, no. Those who are prepared to say yes, however, owe themselves — and dare I say, the cause of Christ and his church — a *prayerful* reading of this booklet. The reader will then be led to ask: Can I in good conscience maintain the charge that to propose the ordination of women is to disregard the authority of the Scriptures and to undermine the confessional foundation of the church?

This publication is unlikely to turn raging waves into a peace-filled lake. Only Jesus does that. But if read with a listening and prayerful heart, this booklet may provide a bridge over troubled water.

Make money the easy way



use the classifieds



Friends of God

Wayne Brouwer

When God lets us down (IV)

“Why, O Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me? ... The darkness is my closest friend” (Psalm 88:14, 18).

Once again, Psalm 88. If in times that we share this experience with Heman the first question we have to ask ourselves is: “How large is my world?”, then the second question is this: “How rich is my spirit?”

We know that Christianity is a religion of comfort. The first question and answer of the *Heidelberg Catechism* frames it that way: “What is your only *comfort* in life and death?” And if religion didn’t bring us comfort, it would be a sorry religion indeed.

But this we need to know as well: Christianity is not a *comfortable* religion! The comfort of our faith does not mean a life of pleasantness, a life of carefree bliss, an existence without pain.

If I experience pain, does that mean that God has left me, that God has betrayed me? Then what, for Christ’s sake, does the Cross mean? What did Jesus mean when he said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me!”? Do you know?

Birth of a Christian mystic

The poet Whittier wrote these beautiful lines:

*Drop thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace.*

That’s a prayer to pray, isn’t it? And blessed is the person who experiences that kind of peace. Whittier did, I’m sure. But what did that peace mean for him?

John Greenleaf Whittier was a social reformer. He worked a lifetime seeking the freedom of slaves, championing the dignity of the human person. Some read the poetry of Whittier and see him only as a Christian mystic, shut up in a quiet and cloistered room, light flowing in at the windows, music and art surrounding him. There, they say, he must have written his gentle poems, his pious prayers, his consoling verse.

But that’s not the picture we should have of him. Think instead of Whittier the travelling speaker. He arrives at a hall in Concord, New Hampshire. He faces the crowd with his convictions, formed from Scripture, shaped at the knee of Jesus. And the crowds pelt him with rotten eggs till his black Quaker coat runs yellow with the stains.

And here’s Whittier caricatured in the press, lampooned as a fool, derided as a traitor. Here’s a man who sank himself deep into his faith, and it was no easy life for him. When he was an old man, this is what he wrote: “I set a higher value on my name as appended to the Anti-Slavery Declaration of 1833 than on the title-page of any book.”

How did he come by a soul that deep? How did he gain the richness of his spirit? Was it through times of ease and pleasantness? You know it wasn’t. It came from years of tortured faithfulness to his God, even when it seemed that his God let him down. Because he wasn’t looking for religion of ease. He was looking for a religion of righteousness and truth.

Plumbing the inner depths

Has your God let you down? Has he failed you? Does he ignore your cries? Then ask yourself this question: “How deep is my spirit?” And when you plumb the depths of your soul, will you find that it is God himself who has given you that deepness of character to know pain, to feel suffering, to agonize over loss?

There’s no excuse for pain in this world. But God didn’t say there was. Nor did he promise to remove it all from your life. He only promised to bring an end to sin, evil and despair. And if your spirit is deep enough to know that, then you still have to say that he hasn’t let you down.

That doesn’t take the pain away. But it does keep the pain under control. In hope. In anticipation.

And that’s the comfort of our religion, isn’t it?

Wayne Brouwer is a pastor at First Christian Reformed Church in London, Ont.

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